

DEATH AT GANKWE

And so once more we were in Sedefo's canoe running the rapids, and once more we pulled up at the landing place. 764

It was quiet enough there, and no one passing would have noticed anything out of the ordinary in the behavior of the one or two women washing clothes at the riverside, or of the children playing about in the water. Again we climbed the path to the village, this time to the delighted shrieks of the children, whose cries brought others, until we were surrounded by a fearless, clamoring group, shouting, calling after us, "Bak'a, Ame'ica' Bak'a!" Sedefo took us to his house, where we met the senior of his two wives, and turned us over to a young man, who had played one of the drums in the ceremony of the evening before, to show us the village. This was the routine of courtesy due any visitor. Nothing more tangible than a slight reserve marked the tension which made this village different from what it would have been on any midafternoon. [296] [515] [514]

In front of the house of mourning all was quiet. Three elderly men sat on their low stools, talking in low tones. They greeted us as we passed but neither engaged us in conversation nor offered us a seat. Inside the house the small fire still smoldered, and, where the hammock had been, now crouched, soundlessly, an old woman who, we later learned, was the dead man's maternal aunt. We were struck with the number of houses that had symbols of spiritual protection over their doors—*obias*, they are called—magically treated to keep the spirits of death from harming the occupants. As we passed one doorway, a woman holding a baby hastily threw a covering over its head, but not before we saw that it had special markings of sacred white clay on its face. The child was under treatment for some illness, and the mother, in these days when spiritual danger stalked about, could take no chances of the Bakra's magic obstructing the cure. [798] [755]

On the other side of the village, farthest away from the house of death, life flowed on yet more evenly. But as we looked about, our guide stiffened, and soon we too caught the sound of the drums which rapidly became louder. He

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

Ah, but they knew each other.

Bayo began paddling faster to keep up with him.

"There is to be a council meeting at Gankwe. I had to hurry away last night, and I must get back there in time. We must have permission from the spirit of the dead man to go back to work, and Sedefo has to find out if he can start up the river, and if he does go, we must all pray to the ancestors because four men will be going from Gankwe, and the *Gran Sember*—the village elders—have things to decide . . . "

Now, fearing that he might have said too much, he doubled his speed, and Bayo understood that the other preferred to be alone. They belonged to different clans, Bayo to the same as the headman of the tribe, and the Gankwe people to another. Gankwe was sending important men to take the Bakra up the river. The chief's own brother, Asikanu, was to go, although it was said he was being sent out of the way while his adultery case was being settled. There had been talk about this case up and down the river. The Gankwe clan head had given a chief's sanctuary to the offender because he was his own brother, people said. Well, if the injured husband committed suicide as he threatened, and sent a kunu to the family of the brother, and even the village and clan, it would be an ugly thing. But so it was with trouble about women. It was as they said,

*"Sleep is death
Woman kills man."*

He half chanted the proverb and smiled, for he looked forward to his trip up the river with an eye to a visit in Lamé, where the women knew how to love. And he began singing the seketi song which he liked so well. Both the melody and the words were old, but he sang the refrain as if it were quite his own—whatever hardships there were on the river, at Lamé one slept with the women!

At the village of Akunkun an old man and a boy of about nine were at the landing place ready to start. Bayo

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

but he did face about, and forgetting his seketi began to pole in earnest.

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In a few moments his body glistened with the exertion, and over the circle and snake of kamemba in the small of his back the perspiration ran down in a trickle. When he had almost caught up he slackened his speed, and he and Bibifo talked about the river. Old Bibifo knew the river well. He was born beyond the Granman's country. A snake swam across the path of the boat, Bayo said. It was good luck. "See, look," he called. His eyes were sharp. The old man saw it, too, and then he called to us. There, close to the shore, a little ahead of us, a constrictor twined its tail about a liana, hanging head down, with a salamander slowly disappearing into its mouth. There was a slight jerk, the liana shook, the snake swallowed, and another bit of the salamander was out of sight.

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[825]
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Farther ahead we heard the report of a gun, and the crying of the mate of the wounded bird followed us for a long while. Bayo and Bibifo identified each cry, called by name the things that grew, planned about their timber rafts when they got back, until the next rapids were reached and passed and the conversation could be resumed, and then they talked about things which they did not care to have the Bakra know, and though they spoke none of the words of their ritual language, we could not understand anything they said. It was not until later that we learned to work out some of the elisions in their speech.

[198]

A strip of sandy beach showed where a village stood, and as we passed it, we could see the azang, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, preventing evil spirits from entering the village. We saw also a strip of white hanging from the end of a stick which had been put up for the ancestors, and beyond, the low shelter for the roughly carved and weathered image holding an obia pot on its head. Under the azang the path stretched like a narrow ribbon which was soon lost as the walls of green converged.

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"Is that another village?" we said, pointing at a pale stretch across the river.

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REBEL DESTINY

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[796] be. The Earth Mother, who is the giver of fertility, takes the adulterous woman who is with child under her protection, and no one may harm her. But the guilty man must make redress to the betrayed husband. Fines must be paid by the adulterer, and there is the beating which the husband administers. This beating has its ritual. The culprit, at the time that is set, comes out to the place where the injured husband and his family wait. They attack him with bare fists, although the Kromanti arm obias are sometimes slipped down on clenched hands, and with these serious wounds can be inflicted. With or without the iron arm bands, the beating is a serious matter, and the man who has committed the trespass is severely mishandled, unless he can get away from his assailants and run into the bush. In the bush he has sanctuary, and at the end of some time may come back to his village. The gods will not give a weakling husband, or one who is not clever enough to take his revenge when it is offered, a second chance.

At times this beating is a merry affair. This happens when the adulterer's family tries to protect him, and then the matter becomes a two-family brawl, or, if the village is a large one with more than one clan substantially represented in it, it may become a fight between two clans. Once, in a village near the railhead, a man was killed in such a fight, and then white police stepped in, and the murderer went to prison.

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[778] A chief, however, can give the culprit sanctuary, and Asikanu, being a chief's brother, was protected by the chief while negotiations were being carried on in his behalf. Now he was sent away from home to be one of our paddlers so that the enraged husband might be dealt with—time helps to cool anger. This was important in Asikanu's case, since the husband of the woman who had gone to Asikanu would consent to no fine, however large, and seemed, furthermore, to have misgivings about the manner in which the ritual beating would be conducted. "I will kill myself," he had been heard to declare. "I will kill myself, and give them all kunu. My yorke—ghost—will come to

Chapter V

THE SHRINE TO THE RIVER GODS

I

ON THE narrow strip of land below the Mamadam, our hammocks were slung between trees whose trunks leaned well over the water, so that once we stretched out on the canvas, it was like swinging over an abyss to the rhythm of water wearing down rock.

At one time the shrine to the gods had stood on this clearing, but boats had gone aground in the falls, and rafts which needed but little urging when the spirits were friendly were swung about in the current and lost to their kingdom at the river bottom. Even now a great log lay wedged in between rocks in the middle of the stream. The water had worn grooves into its hard surface, yet there it was, held fast against the timeless flaying of the falls.

Nor was that all. One year when the time for the new rains came, the rain did not fall. In the villages the priests climbed the ladders within the sacred enclosures and from on high poured out libations to the ancestors, beseeching them to intercede in behalf of the living. Those who had river spirits went to the waterside when the moon was dead to dance to the gods. But the drums gave back a dull sound, and the dancing was listless. Those who plunged into the river to swim against the rapids while the drums intoned the exhortations did not remain under water long, and when they came up they uttered no oracles. Many who were known to be possessed by powerful spirits paced back

REBEL DESTINY

776 had seen a hand reach out for the boat, had seen it vanish
782 out of sight. The gods had accepted the offerings. That year
783 the Granman from the city, the white Granman, had to
send rice from a far country to feed them, but the next
year the crops were good, and all had been well since that
time.

• [798] "And was that when this shrine was removed to the
other island?"

"*M'an sabi. A kan de*—I do not know. It is possible."

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782 "When you get to the Mamadam," we had been told by
798 a priestess in the city, "wash your face in the running
water, and call on the Mother of the River three times."

Another had said, "If your foot should trip anywhere, be
783 sure to call on your ancestors, but if you should happen to
798 slip at the Mamadam, you must go at once to the river,
strike the water three times, and ask the Mother of the
[794] River to release your soul. It is a bad thing to lose your
soul there."

538 And our principal story-teller in the city, who was some-
796 thing of a ~~man~~ it, had said: "You both have light eyes. Your
hair is not dark. You are not unlike the Bonkoru people
who are light, and who, up the river, you will hear called
the Toné folk." He was speaking of albinos. "It may be
that you have a river god without knowing it. When you
come to the Mamadam the spirit may come to you: You
may find yourself speaking the tongue that only the Toné
people know, and dancing the dances to the river gods, and
swimming up the rapids. It will be a fine sight to see you
dance to the drums. There was once such a woman. A
woman white as you are, you hear? I myself saw her dance.
[822] When she danced, she wore red, and put a plug through her
lip, and as she danced her color changed. She became black.
When the spirit was satisfied, it let her go, and she paled
and was a white woman again. I myself saw that woman
dance. I saw her grow black while she danced, and saw

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her become pale again. This may happen to you when you
get to the Mamadam."

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As he spoke, he began to beat on the table the drum
rhythm which calls the river god, and he sang,

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"Today, today, O Spirit,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-o.
Hard times are upon us.
Today, today, Boyo,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-e."

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And then he sang another song, which he said had been
sung at the time when black people were running away from
slavery, and is still heard at dances to the spirits of the
river, the *watra ingi*, as the river gods are called in the city.
In it, he called on the *agida*, the great drum upon which, in
town as in the bush, the Negroes call the river gods, and
on *Kopsi*, the name of one of the spirits of the water. This
time he sang,

"I will play the *agida* today,
I will knock the *agida* today-o
Kopsi will foil the magic
Of the crowing cock.
O, I will play the *agida* today,
I will knock the *agida*, today-o,
Kopsi will foil the magic,
Of the crowing cock.
I will play the *agida* today."

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As we gained the island where the shrine itself stood and
looked about us from the high rocks of the sacred spot,
there lay before us in the early morning light a scene of
inexpressible beauty. At dusk the narrow strips of land
which forced the river into three channels had been like
dark machetes plunged into the body of the great stream.

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REBEL DESTINY

133 But now a soft haze floated over stream and bush. To the right was the Ingi Sopi channel, dropping so sheer that not even an unloaded dugout could make its way up the rapids, not a single log of wood could be floated down. To the left was the Mamadam, a smoother, more rounded slope. It was up these falls that our boats would later be hauled.

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484 Below us on the rocks our men were unloading the corials and carrying the provisions along the narrow trodden path to the topmost ledge of the falls, where the empty dugouts would be reloaded after they had been taken up through the streaming water.

133 Beyond lay the full stretch of the river. As far as the eye could see, there were none of the channels, none of the many islands which are met with everywhere on this river from its very headwaters to the reaches of the tidal belt near the coast. About us was a stillness which the very roar of the water heightened. The parrots had long ago passed on in pairs. The butterflies would wait for the sun before they went winging from the east bank to the west. This was a moment of pure interlude. No sun, no breeze, no sound, no glow. This was the moment before the fragmentary dawn would end, before the haze would lift, this the moment when night, having met day, as the Bush Negroes said, was disappearing from sight.

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[482] "It is fine here, ah!" Bayo called to us, as he walked on with a large canister balanced on his head, making his way up the rocks with the sureness and ease of one who is strolling down a lane with the consciousness of a pleasant encounter at the next turning.

• 798
346 As soon as the mist had lifted, we walked up the rocks to the shrine. Facing us and the lower river, a tall, slender pole, weathered to a pale silver, stood higher than the roof of the shrine in front of which it was planted. At its top were the crude outlines of a head and, some three feet from its base, two side pieces were nailed to it and grounded at an angle to steady the image against the onrush of a sudden wind. A short distance from the pole was the shrine

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itself, an open shelter under a thatched roof resting on four posts. Inside it, upon the ground, lay a flat stone whitened with sacred clay, and on this a bottle stood. Directly behind the stone was the altar, a low table on which lay several egg-shaped pieces of the sacred pemba—the white clay—and some egg-shaped stones which had come from the bed of the river. A circle of iron, perhaps two fingers' breadth in thickness and having a diameter of ten or twelve inches, rested on the ground under the altar. A stick had been planted to face the thicket of wild pineapple that made a wall at the back, and from it hung a strip of white cotton for the ancestors. To the left of this was a simply carved stool, the tracery of its design become all but indistinguishable under the coat of white clay which covered it. Several bottles lay at the foot of this stool. 778 346

"Ya-hai, mati, you are praying to the Mother of the River. It is well," said Kasanya, as he came up to us with his pole-man and the men from Gankwe and interrupted our scrutiny of the shrine. [359]

Followed by Sedefo and Asikanu, he entered the shrine, while the others stood with us outside the railing which connected at sides and back the posts upon which the roof rested. Kasanya called on the Sky God first. "G'an gadu," he began, "Mother of the River, Ancestors, grant that we travel safely. Grant that we bring the white man safely to the country of the Granman. Grant that the white man pay us well. I thank you." 782

As he finished, the listening men clapped their hands in unison, and spoke in chorus, "Great thanks!" Some distance away, down the slope which dropped to the river, was Bibifo, who wanted to be called Adrian. He did not come too near the shrine, but there he was, halfway up, with head bent, his lips moving as he muttered a prayer of his own.

Now Sedefo came forward, and Kasanya left the shrine and disappeared behind the pineapple bushes. When he came back he held leaves in his hand, which he said were sacred. He would crush them and put them in water dipped 783 824

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783 here at the Mamadam, and later he would bathe with this
824 that he might be purified. Meanwhile Sedefo and Asikanu,
each in his turn, addressed the Mother of the River, each
speaking his errand and asking that his journey be
prospered.

782 Bayo came up alone when the loading was quite finished.
He sat down on a crosspiece of the shrine to one side of the
flat rock, poured some of the contents of the bottle on the
stone, and, taking up one of the egg-shaped pieces of
pemba, he rubbed it between his fingers and touched the
[302] moist stone with his whitened hands. Now with his fingers
he streaked his upper arm, just below the shoulders and
over the muscles which played to the swinging of the pole-
stick, and then his chest and knees.

"Mother of the River, give us a safe journey. Carry the
white man and his woman without sickness. I thank you."

Later, when we were about to make off, he turned to us
with his ready laugh. "You will walk well, Ba'ka. I have a
strong spirit. I said things to the Mother of the River under
my breath which you did not hear. The Mother of the
River will look after you."

"What is this log, Bayo, right here on top of the falls?
Why has no one claimed it?" we asked, pointing to the
log of purple-heart close by, which we had noticed lying
across the Mamadam.

"When it was sent down, something happened to turn it
sidewise, and it was caught so. No one will touch it. It
must be that the gods wanted it for themselves."

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788 There are many shrines on the river. At the G'an Creek a
84 man would speak his prayer from a distance, call the creek
"ancestor," state his errand, and continue his journey.
Far up the stream, where the juncture of the Pikien Rio
and the Grand Rio forms the river which the Bush Negroes
call the Saramacca, is the Tapa Wata shrine. There, our
men said, we would do well to avoid looking, though our
boat rested across the river more than a quarter of a mile

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away. It seemed dangerous even to notice the strip of white cotton which showed high above the falls, though the stick from which it hung we could not see. 778
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"Human beings do not go there," Bayo had said warningly. "Human eyes must also not go there."

But the shrine at the Mamadam is a friendly place. There a man finds a moment's ease. For a brief interval, at least, the voyager upstream or down rests there to get his breath, as he makes ready for a new start. Directly below the falls is a stretch of still water, which follows upon the wearisome portage at the Musumba Prati and the struggle with the rapids just above it, while, when continuing up river, the boatmen face a succession of rapids before another stretch of quiet water is reached. It is not strange, therefore, that no man, whatever his need to make time, will fail to stop at the Mamadam long enough to make known to the Mother of the River his errand and to ask for the continuance of her protection. 778
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This shrine is the home of the Great Mother of the inland waters, she who, above all else, had secured to the ancestors of these Bush Negroes their freedom from slavery. In the city and on the plantations of the coastal region the Negroes, under states of possession by the water gods, sing of their longing to join those at the Mamadam. 778
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Let me die on the river, O!
Let me die on the water, O!
All the Ingi spirits
Are at the Mamadam,
Let me die on the river, O!

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Deep in the interior, if one of the elders, let us say a man of the Dahomey clan, is alarmed at the prospect of the white man penetrating their bush, some man can be looked to, then, to say reassuringly, "Have no fear. They will not come beyond the Mamadam!"

For this river is their own. "Once, long, long ago," the legend was told us, "this river was but a creek. There were no great trees here, no rocks. There were no boats, no 773

PARENTS, CHILDREN, AND GRANDCHILDREN

This was not the only instance of our meeting an individual who liked to stay in her father's village. There was the girl Takuda. Her mother was of the Kasito clan, and her house was in Dahomey, its principal settlement. She was not happy among her mother's people, and when we met her, she was living with her father's family.

"Does her mother's family not want her with them?" we asked a friend with whom we were discussing her.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Should not a child live in her father's home if she wants to?" he answered simply. "A father likes his children, and they like him, too."

Nor was it strange. To the child, the father was a man of the older generation to whom he could come for sympathy. He rarely corrected, for this was the task of the mother and her family. Often it was he who interceded with the older people in behalf of a son who wished to do something which his maternal family opposed. If a father gave small gifts to his children, they were looked upon truly as gifts. The ritual obligations of gift-giving chiefly lay with the mother's side.

But there was more than just the affection for a boon companion which children felt for their fathers. There was pride in the father, pride in his achievements, and identification with his village.

When the Granman told us he was arranging for us to visit the village across the river from his own, he said, "Today you will see my father's house. Let them shoot guns so that I may know when you arrive in my father's village. They will show you everything. It is a fine village," he ended, with pride. "It is my father's country."

The last phrase was a refrain which ran through our entire visit there.

"This is the village of the Granman's father," we heard, again and again. "This is the house of the father of the Granman," one said, and another, "This is where the father of the Granman would sit in krutu." This person and that were introduced as belonging to the family of the father of the Granman. The climax came when we were shown the shrine to the ancestors. An especially elaborate

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798 place was pointed out to us. The carved representation of the human face of the image was worked more carefully than is ordinarily done. Here the white clay was applied more thickly. The white cloth hanging from its stick was larger than we had ever seen before, the offerings of food and bottles and calabashes more numerous than at other ancestral shrines.

"This is where the yorka of the father of the Granman comes," we were told.

But why the father? What of the mother, the parent to whom the Granman was related? This village did not even belong to the Matchau clan to which he himself belonged. Yet with the pride that this was the shrine to the spirit of the Granman's father went a realization of its importance. Here was something outside the legal order, something which transcended the facts of descent and the theory of relationship. It was becoming ever more evident that in this "matriarchate" the father did count.

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796 The inheritance of the father's kunu was one instance where the father needed to be taken very much into account. "If this man's children should take some of his goods," they had said, pointing at things we could see through the slats of the dead man's treasure house in the village of Opoku, "they will get his kunu, too. No man wants that."

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962 Then there was the *trefu*, or *tchina*—taboo—as it was called in the bush, of which our cook had told us. Every individual in the bush had his *tchina*. Everyone knew the things he must not eat, or must not do. One man had to abstain from eating *anumara*, the great fish of the river. Another might never sleep in the open without a roof over his head. Should he find himself out in the bush with night coming, he must stop early enough to erect a small shelter and thatch it that his head might be covered when he slept. Bayo, we soon learned, might not eat food out of the cooking pot, and Sedefo could not bathe in a creek. Kasanya

A NIGHT AT S'EI

open shelter, covered by a gabled thatch. At both sides the eaves extended several feet from the posts which supported the roof, and almost touched the ground. The floor was of red clay, hardened and smooth. There were no stools about, and no other decorations. Men summoned to a council came with their own council benches. About two of the slender posts which faced the path were obias made of twined native sisal, of narrow strips of blue and red cotton, and cowrie shells. Each differed a little from the other, and each had its own potency, but what this was, none would say. On one of the crosspieces below the eaves were large balls of hardened red clay. They had been put there by the old women to await the time for molding the clay into the obia pots, which, after they had been fired, would be blackened with the soot of rice hulls and oil and refired. 344 [778]

Against the crossbeams in one corner of the council house the women had gathered, and at the other end the men were seated on their stools, with Captain And'u and the bassia, the man second in command, among them. While the men were discussing the Neng'e Nana, their Negro grandfathers from Africa, the women were addressing some direct questions to the white woman.

Why was she not smoking a pipe, as fitted the position of a woman of rank who was on her way to visit the Gran-man? What had she done with her children when she went on this long journey which took twenty-one nights and days to reach the Suriname white man's city? Did she like her husband's other wife? Had she more children than the other wife? What rank would her sons inherit from their uncles? 000

"How many gods have you?" one of the younger women asked.

"I have four—three Vodú, and one Apuku," another said, as though the question had been put to her, and she could say with pride that she had three snake gods, and one bush god. 776

The bassia's handsome wife, who had overheard the men speak of the white man's book which showed pictures of their ancestors, said, "The whites read out of books. The 776 186

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824 Later, through the gathering darkness, the people of the
796 neighboring villages went home, paddling their boats which
[423] were loaded down with the fish that had been netted. And
[425] from this time on, everyone knew that this neku vine was
the property of him who had found it, and of his family,
down through his mother's line, forever.

"Ai, mati, you would have seen something, if you had
got here for the neku dance!"

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361 Like any other Bush Negro village, S'ei was a series of
sandy clearings about which were grouped huts of woven
palm fronds and palm thatch. All about was the big bush.

[487] The trails which led from the village were each guarded
[489] by a magically treated palm azang, and shrines to the
ancestral spirits who saw to it that evil was kept away.

Where the several paths led, a stranger was not encouraged
to discover. Down one, women were to be seen disappearing

[492] in the morning with trays on their heads, their infants
astride their backs, held inside the folds of a cloth which
was fastened high above their breasts, and caught up again
below them. In many upper river villages, this path led
to the fields, some distance away. Others were the way to

• [498] shrines, erected to those spirits which must be worshiped
outside the village. Another path might lead to a brook,
which the villagers held sacred. There were trails, too,
which connected neighboring villages, and led perhaps
farther yet, but for the stranger, the highway was the river,

[486] and no matter how short the distance between one settle-
ment and another, he was not invited to make his way
through the bush.

"You do not want to go through the bush, white man.
In the bush are evil spirits," we heard many times.

361 A village clearing was divided into quarters. Each quarter
592 was inhabited by one of the *mbe*, or extended families, and
the quarter bore its name. It was composed of several house-
holds—five or six or more, depending upon the size of the

1: Henskovitz & Henskovitz E-S (1928-1929) 1934

SRS Bush Negroes SRS
Saramacca

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Shrine of the Apuku gods.



Kromanti
Mama.



Village guardians.

[Facing P. 158]

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village. A household was not confined to one building only, but few who were not men of rank and means had more than three. One was for the woman and her children, another for storing the crops, and the third was the man's treasure house, where women might not come. It was like the matter of wives. Only men of position could afford more than one. But if a man had two wives and both lived in his village, then perhaps five huts would bear a design identified with him on the carved side posts which outlined the low doorway. This design would recur in the various carvings he had made for his women—it was his crest. And though a man from another village, who was not related to him, might like it, and liking it copy it, this practice would be socially frowned upon. [554] [595] [531] [423]

A village quarter, however, did not contain only dwelling places, and storehouses, and men's treasure houses. Certain families also had in their part of the village an enclosed shrine for the family gods. If in a given family a powerful Vodou, or snake god, had come to an ancestress and had in a dream, or in a seizure, or through a revelation made to an obia man, chosen her as his 'asi—his priestess or medium—then with this disclosure came the instructions for the place of locating a house of worship to that Vodou, and the type of house it was to be. Such a shrine, once erected, would be kept in the quarter, and worshiped by the members of that family. Sometimes in front of a dwelling hut, a low enclosure, the size of a small kennel, would stand a little to the side of the door. This was a house to Toné, the river spirit. In one such house lived a woman who had a great Toné god. She had the gift of prophecy. When the men gathered for a council meeting in the village of the Granman, then she, too, would sometimes be bidden to come and sit with the men, though, being a woman, she could never speak at council meetings. [591] [562]

"Touch her skin," the other women said, pointing out this albino woman, "and you will have your desires fulfilled." [526]

In each quarter, too, there was an open house where the women did their cooking, and perhaps a platform or two, [343] [251]

REBEL DESTINY

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251 where, in the proper season, maripa nuts and rice were dried.

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798 One quarter differed very little from another, except that in one there might grow the plant which yielded the red and black beans used for the sacred rattles, and for playing the game of adji, which entertained the spirit of the dead while the body lay in state. Instead of a house to the family gods, there might be found a mound of earth in front of one doorway, with an axe-head lying upon it as a shrine for a man's spirit, or a low forked stick sunk into the ground, holding a pot with water and weeds in it for the curing powers of its obia.

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344 A village of any size had also a quarter in which stood the communal buildings. The council house which might also serve on occasion as the house for the dead was there. The menstrual house for the women, a small building which was recognized by a broken calabash, or a porcelain pot brought from the white man's city, lying outside the entrance, stood a little to the side. The Kromanti house, and perhaps an enclosed shelter for the bush gods who shared the shrine with the snake deities, was also located somewhere near the open communal shrine. A village wherein lived the clan head contained in addition a house for the ancestral spirits of the clan. This was called a *Fa'aka-pau wosu*, literally a flagpole house, a euphemism for the shrine to the ancestors for whom white cotton was put up on sticks. In this *Fa'aka-pau wosu* prayers were offered up for all the important ventures of the clan, and in time of stress a priest would come there with sacrifices, to bid one of the ancestors to enter his body and give him sight. When seizure came on, such a priest prophesied. Sometimes the ancestors were consulted in the same manner as that in which the will of the dead was ascertained. Men would take up a sacred plank and carry it in a state of possession; the elders would put questions to the ancestor who had been called. The answers were construed as favorable or unfavorable according to the way the plank tipped.

A NIGHT AT S'EI

As we made a tour of the village, we discussed all this with the chief and his bassia, and with the other men who accompanied us. When we reached the open place sacred to the great gods, we stopped. The shrine was a fenced-in space, perhaps eight or nine feet long and almost as wide. Inside was a slender pole, with a head carved on its top, and a cotton tunic about its middle, and this was the wife of the Great God, the chief said. The ladder with the platform on it, on which stood a bottle, was the shrine of the great Sky God. At the base of the image with the tunic were several bottles, some white clay, and a few empty glasses, and everywhere were sticks with cloth on them, many with the cloth in tatters. Where the cotton had altogether rotted away, the stick alone remained.

"Let us go in," said the chief to the men.

With the chief came a young man whose hair was braided, and who wore several obias on neck and arms. He was training to become an obia man. The bassia signaled us to follow, but the others remained outside.

The young man took up a bottle and poured some of its contents into an earthen jar, and from the jar he poured out a libation to the Earth Mother. The captain prayed, explaining that we were white people on our way to the Granman, that he was leaving in the morning to notify the Granman of our approach. Would the gods take him and us in safety, and would they see to it that all we saw should be seen with the eyes of friendship? Then he prayed for a child in the village who was ill, and for his people, and for the clan of the Granman, the Matchau lo, and for his own family. After each prayer he paused, and those outside the paling clapped their hands and sang out, "Great thanks."

Before the chief's prayer was finished, an old man came by with a bush knife in his belt, and his gun. He was just then returning from the hunt, and he stopped to thank the great gods for the kill he had made. He spoke in a whisper, but his intonation was as conversational as the chief's had been.

AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

We would proceed a short distance, and we would ask again, "Aren't those drums speaking?" 203

"Women are pounding rice."

But when we had asked the third time, he remained silent for a while, straining for the sound as though he could barely distinguish it. "Ya-hai, it's the apinti talking."

Some distance from Godo, which is situated just below the Tapa Wata falls, a small boat came up to us, paddled by one man. Bibifo whispered to us that this was Sungi, the head of the Kasito clan, and we knew that we were somewhere in the vicinity of the sacred village of Dahomey. He had come to pilot our boats into the Pikien Rio, he explained, after the greetings were over. 502

"Farther ahead others will come to help your boats up the rapids. I am here to show you the best course through this rough water. The G'aman has sent me to you. He awaits you."

"Bayo," we said, when Chief Sungi had left us to head up our little flotilla, "show us the landing place of Dahomey when we pass it."

We knew that we could not set foot in Dahomey, for it is the seat of the Bush Negro's most potent magic. Whether there is that in the village which the white man may not see, or whether, as we had been told, the natives do not wish to tempt the fates by bringing there those who would be doomed by the magic which kills the white man if he but treads on its earth, no one could say. But we had been warned that it would be of no avail to ask to be taken to Dahomey. 778

"Did you hear us, Bayo?"

"Ai?"

When we spoke to him again about the Dahomey landing place, however, he showed great astonishment. He had pointed it out to us, he said. How was it that we now asked about it again?

"It must be that it was with you like it was with the other white man who wanted to see Dahomey," he said.

REBEL DESTINY

- 778 The other white man was the Catholic missionary who
797 for years had been living in the Gran Rio. He was a friend of the Saramacca people, and they liked him. Now this white man wanted to see Dahomey. He said that he, too, had a strong God who protected him. He asked so many times that they at last promised to take him there. But when he got to Pempeh he fell asleep, and he slept till . . . till they reached the Granman's country. So his life was saved. The gods, knowing that he was a friend of the Saramacca people, did not want to kill him. They put him to sleep until Dahomey was well out of reach.

"And this is what happened to you, Bak'a. The gods did not want to hurt you, so you did not see."

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- 133 Past these rapids and another stretch of rough water, and then before us lay the highest falls of the Saramacca. To the right, over a ledge of rock spreading in an unbroken sweep across its entire width poured the Gran Rio, the river up which lay the villages of the Loango clan, and beyond, the untrodden jungle which barricaded the way to the country of the Indians, and the basin of the Amazon. To the left was the final bit of fast water that remained between us and the village where the Granman awaited us. We were at last in the Pikien Rio.

- [574] Here the stream narrowed, and we could see on both banks the people who were waiting to see us pass. The gay colors of the women's cloths were brilliant against the background of green, and their hallooing reached our ears above the rush of the water. A canoe with several young men came alongside.

"We are here to help you with your boats. We have been sent by the Granman. Fire three shots to let him know you are in the Pikien Rio."

- 576
[201] We fired, and instantly there was an answering salute of three guns. With the reinforcement of paddlers, it did not take long to reach the island which separated us from the landing place of Asindopo Lantiwe. Here all strangers

REBEL DESTINY

344 to be admired for their artistry, but there also for ceremonial
352 purposes which were never divulged. When one of these benches was later taken down to show the magic of paper which, placed on the top of a carving and rubbed with black crayon, reproduced the design beneath, the Granman looked startled, and then ordered that it be replaced. Nor were other rubbings allowed.

531 On both sides of these massed benches were many objects
352 which could barely be distinguished in the half darkness of the house. There were guns and canisters, there were a few native brooms, and several wrapped parcels.

[534] There was also an apinti drum on which the gods were
[198] addressed. Not even at Ma'lobbi, where the chief, a famous carver, showed us many remarkable products of his art, did we see designs worked with the fine, sure lines or the beauty of individual motifs such as were traced on this apinti. The carving was in relief and covered the entire surface of the drum, which stood about three feet high, curving outwards from the top, and resting on a narrow circular base which raised its body about six inches from the ground. It was covered with a deerskin that use and exposure to the atmosphere had stained unevenly to shades of amber.

344 Facing these carvings was the door which, itself of
1916 wood, swung on wooden hinges of native fashioning. In
532 relief appeared the Earth Mother, and surrounding her were the symbols of fertility. No man, not even the Granman himself, dared speak her name in this council house. At
[695] trials, when oaths were taken, she might be appealed to, but to call her idly would bring down her wrath on the Granman's clan, and, perhaps not stopping there, since the council house was of all the clans, she would revenge herself upon all the people of the Saramacca River. The carving was more beautiful than on the apinti which stood against the opposite wall. The greatest artist on the river had made it.

"That man had the gods, ya-hai," the men said, when we talked of the Granman's carvings.

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

to him when the drums called that god, could not be held accountable for what he did while his god had him in his control.

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No stranger, no man who came to live in his wife's village, even though he had spent a good part of his life there, took it upon himself to offer advice to his wife's family. Again and again we would hear from men and women on the river, "In our village we do it this way," or, "We only carry the corpse on the head twice. Our spirits don't like to be troubled more often," or, "Mawu as a name for the Great God is used in our village, but not everywhere on the river."

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There was the experience with several sacred images of village gods we had bought from an upper-river village. Our paddlers refused to carry them for us from the village to the boats, and it was with marked uneasiness that they permitted us to put them into the boats.

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[778]

"We do not know what these gods can do. We do not know what is hateful to them. They are the gods of another people. We won't carry them."

But with the *gomi*—the child of the village of his mother's family, it was quite otherwise. He was a member of the village, he had a voice in its governing, he knew its gods. If he belonged to the family of the chief of the clan, if, let us say, his older brother were the chief, or if he was one of several nephews of a chief who had no surviving brothers, then at the death of the chief there would be a *krutu*, and the men of the village would decide which one of the several men who were eligible for the office was the most capable.

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Though rank was hereditary there was always selection among several heirs, and again the final word rested with the people of the clan. The offices of lesser chiefs—village chiefs who were subject to the clan chief, or *bassias* who served the chiefs—were passed on in the same manner.

[424]

While law making was in the hands of the chiefs, or captains, and the *krutu* over which they presided, law enforcement was the task of the *bassias*. It was they who saw to it that the orders of the chiefs were carried out. When

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[622]

REBEL DESTINY

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619 their nephews took up the dancing for the gods, their interests were directed more and more toward the clan rule.

[887] "I do not dance any more," Sedefo had told us, "My sons dance Kromanti now. I must do now what is expected of a man of my years. I must see that our people act wisely in all things which touch this world, and the world of our ancestors."

A clan krutu was a self-sufficient unit made up of members whose maturity fitted them for looking after the worldly and supernatural welfare of their people, for in the larger organization of the tribe it was the clans who stood one with another in perfect equality to complete the whole—the Saramacca people.

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622 The chieftain of the principal village of the clan was the clan head. In him was vested the right to speak for the large grouping, and in the krutu which he conducted the etiquette approached that of the tribal krutu in its intricacy. The village where the clan head lived was inhabited predominantly by his people. In other villages on the river his people might be one of several clan groups. Several villages were inhabited by three or even four clan groups, each of which had its own captain. But such villages were not the seats of clan heads. Where a clan chief ruled would be not only the clan krutu house, but the shrines raised to the important dead of the clan, the clan ancestors whose spiritual powers to help and advise the living were as great as the feats they had accomplished when alive. Here, too,

• [198] at the village where the clan head lived would be the shrines to the gods who had the clan under their special protection. Above all, here under the direction of the chief were not only those who guided the worldly destinies of the clan, but those who knew how to control the supernatural forces. Here were the obias owned by the clan, those spiritual and unique healing powers whose magic would respond only to the will of clan members who had undergone the training which taught them to operate those forces their ancestors had left for them.

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

"I have my obia from Lamé," Bayo had said. "People like me because of this obia." 778
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When we came to Lamé we found that the people who inhabited it controlled more than the love obia. They had a powerful fighting obia, too. There was not only *bumba*, that gave power in love, but also *poitchi*, the obia that helped a man in a fight. But one who wanted to become a great hunter did not go to Lamé. Such a person sought out an obia man of the Dombi clan, who, working with the power of *mafungi*, helped him to see his game in the dark bush, though the animal was of the color of the bush itself, and, once having tracked it, helped him make his aim deadly. A man suffering from a bad gunshot wound would try to get an obia man from the Loango people to come and call on the powers of the Loango clan-obia to heal the dying man. For broken bones there was magic in the sacred village of Dahomey where centered the Kasito clan, and at Dahomey was also the best magic on the river for warriors. [755]
'*Bofyuando* and *sokoma'usu* were the two great warrior obias, and so powerful were they that if one but whispered their names, without taking the stems of two weeds, putting one crosswise on top of the other, and over them passing a coin to recompense for speaking the sacred names, the man who spoke would die. These obias belonged to the Kasito people, so strong in magic.

Of these clans there might be twelve or thirteen or fourteen. Among the Saramacca people, we learned, the clan partakes of the mysterious, the awesome. Our Bush Negro friends did not discuss their clans readily, and none of them would give us a list of their names. A few might be mentioned by one man, a few by another. 614

"To speak of the *lo* is not a thing for strangers," we were told. "My clan I can name, and another man can tell you the name of his clan. My father's clan I can name, too, but not others."

On one occasion we had made clear to a young man who had been away for some time in French Guiana, and who considered himself a man of the world, why we sought the

REBEL DESTINY

342 uninhabited. Its posts and walls and thatch were in
643 excellent condition, and there was not even the weather-
beaten appearance about it of a house which had been
closed for some time. Nor had it the kandu, the spiritual
lock of unoccupied houses.

• 778 To one side of this house was the open shrine to the
346 great gods, the pole to the Sky God, the smaller one with a
checked tunic across the middle of it for the Earth Mother.
But there was also a figure of wood with a broad white
cloth hung from it like a flag, and this, the villagers said,
was the image of the Granman's father. When the dead
man's spirit came to the village, it was this image he
animated. In times of need and on days fixed by ritual, it
was to this image that prayers and food were brought.

Some distance from this shrine, standing close to the
uncleared bush, was a house that had been deserted. Half
of it the great bush had already reclaimed. The thatch of
the roof and one entire side wall had altogether disappeared,
and in place of these were garlands of leafy vines, so closely
interwoven and so brilliantly green in the sun as to give to
the asymmetrical mass of weathered grayish palm, and the
strangling green, a strange beauty. Not quite two years
ago it had been abandoned, and soon it would be com-
pletely lost to the bush.

But the villagers looked the other way when we photo-
graphed it.

A little to one side of the house with the doorposts which
showed the Granman's crests was a smaller hut, before
[789] whose door stretched a magic azang of palm fronds that
marked it as a shrine.

[796] "This house is for the Apuku gods," said an old woman
who heard our inquiry. "It belongs to me. It was built
when my god told me to make it."

And without hesitation she led the way under the palm
fronds through the opening.

This was the first time we had been permitted to enter a
closed shrine. We had had descriptions of shrines from men
with whom we had talked of the gods. There were some,

THE GODS SPEAK

they told us, though never willing to name the villages⁷⁷⁸ where they stood, whose walls were most elaborately³⁴⁶ ornamented with symbols marked in red and black and^[531] white, the three sacred colors which appeared on the stools and which the men used for painting their faces and bodies for the dances. On the upper river we had been told that these shrines were in the villages below, and on the lower river it was always intimated that it was up above where the great shrines stood. We had been told of stools which were whitened with sacred pemba, and blackened with soot in the *Fa'aka Pau* houses—the houses of the ancestral spirits—and of the covered whitened vessels which were in^[769] the Vodun and Apuku houses, the shrines for the bush and snake deities, placed there for the spirits when they chose to animate them.

So we found it in this house dedicated to the spirits of the bush.

The hut was narrow and long, with walls of woven palm, and a floor made of hard smooth clay into which bare feet had nevertheless worn grooves. To one side of the door stood a drum of the type called *tumao*—the long drum. It was cylindrical, and narrowed but slightly toward the^[534] bottom. White clay had once covered it, but now there were irregular lines of white marking the cracks in the wood.

On the other side of the door, against the same wall, lay several large balls of clay. These the old woman was keeping⁸⁸⁷ for the obia pots she would make from time to time. Among⁷⁷⁸ the Negroes of the town as well as in the bush, these black³²³ pots, made by women of the bush, were held to have great magical potency.

"I never make too many pots at once," the old woman said. "I make them for myself as I need them and for the young people of the family." A woman who had not passed her period of childbearing could not make them. "Obia pots are things for old, old women. I cannot tell you about making them."

Leaving these lumps of clay, the woman led us farther⁷⁷⁸ into the enclosure, until we stood in front of a raised altar³⁴⁶

REBEL DESTINY

778 of earth which filled the rest of the hut. In the left-hand
396 corner was a covered whitened vessel for the god called
Kentina Dagowe. This Kentina Dagowe was a deity who
776 was the offspring of the Dagowe snake, and the Apuku god
778 of the bush whose name was Kentina. In him, as in so many
other of the spirits, we found exemplified the Bush Negro's
concept of the world which held that the gods mated as
did humans, that all which stirred and had life came into
being by such matings.

[773] Other spirits also came to this house, the woman went
on. Mundewayá, another of the bush gods, was worshiped
at the white-covered pot in the opposite corner, while
beside it lay the vessel to which the spirit of a third might
come. This one was the most powerful of all bush gods,
and his name was Danhowao. There were other objects
on the platform. Two stools, daubed with sacred clay, had
their place there, and in the center was an image of wood,
a rounded pot set on a base that tapered from the ground
toward it, and this was to the Nanai, the ancestors.

The old woman said, "For the Apuku gods, we only play
the tumao drum. The Apuku are mostly women's gods, but
some men have them, and the men who have them play
the drums. When the god comes to you, then if you are not
[888] too old you dance. But we old women do not dance. When
the god comes to me, then I begin to shake. I go into this
house on the day we call him, and they play the drum.
Then I talk to the god. If I have something to beg of him
for myself, or for someone else, then I put the pot which
[787] belongs to him on my head, and the drum calls him. When
my body begins to shake, then it is the god. He has come,
and when I speak it is not I but the god speaking."

776 From the clearing the talk of those who had remained
609 outside came through the thin woven walls of the shrine.
[203] From one to another we could hear the news spread that
in the village of the Granman across the river the gods had
spoken for the whites.

In the hut, we listened to the old woman inside whose
shrine we stood.

THE GODS SPEAK

"The openings in the wall there," she explained, when we asked her about the two squares cut into the wall behind the altar, "are for all things that fly. In this place they must come and go as they like. Bats come here, and insects of all kinds, and when they want to go back to the bush, they must be able to go as they like. That is the wish of the gods. So they told us long ago."

6

We were led from house to house. The gods had spoken. We were friends, and as friends who came not to harm, we were given the hospitality of friendship. There were other shrines, but we did not have to ask about them. They were pointed out to us with the other sights of the village.

The closed low hut near the Apuku shrine we had entered was to the river god Toné. It was a very small enclosure, and before it was a plant which covered the low entrance. It belonged, we were told, to an albino woman who was possessed by Toné. But she was not in the village now. Farther down the path was a larger house, another shrine. This had a piece of iron over the door and, when we asked about it, the girls who were following us ran, and the men merely said that it was the place of the Kromanti obia and passed on.

As we continued on our way, each woman was anxious not to have us slight the house her man had built her or fail to admire the carvings that were inserted into the weave of the palm walls. The huts were swept clean—the cleanliness of the entire village was even more striking than that of others we had visited—and but for a few stools, which were brought out for the strangers while they spoke with the old people who lived in the quarter, they were entirely bare. In every house, however, there was sure to be a shelf, large or small, or several shelves, on which stood prized food trays with carvings which covered both inner and outer surfaces. Combs and food stirrers were taken down and shown us, and the calabash dishes made by the women

REBEL DESTINY

353 themselves, and the blade-like pieces of gourd which they
531 used for spoons, and which bore the same symbols as the
415 dishes.

462 "Our men make fine things here in the true, true
531 Saramacca," Dida said when we entered her quarter, and
sat in her house. "Look at the carvings I have."

Her body was still white with pemba. Her manner was
still a little vague.

"Did you dance this morning?"

"Ai."

776 "We heard the agida drum play when we were in the
council house of the Granman."

787 "Ai, Kesekia is a big god. When he comes, his voice is
strong."

But she showed no willingness to talk, and we could tell
by the repeated twitching of her body that she had still
to dance to her god. Leaving her we continued up the path
toward houses we had not yet visited. The white man, with
a man who was guiding him and the bassia from Asindopo
Lantiwe, walked ahead, while the children crowded about
the white woman who was giving them safety pins which
they at once put in their hair.

778 "There is the Vodou house," said the man who acted as
guide, and he led the way through the low doorway into
346 the hut.

Inside, though smaller than the shrine to the gods of the
bush, it differed from it but little. It had the same clay
floor, the same raised altar on which stood stools washed
in white clay, and several covered, whitened vessels, an
image, and the round balls of clay.

"May I go closer and look at the image there?"

"Yes, go."

[352] The stools resembled those in ordinary use, but whatever
design they may have had was obscured by the white clay
which covered them. The vessels were not unlike those in
[415] the other shrine we had visited or those which rested on the
heads of village gods which stood under low, roofed-over
shelters on the main village paths. Turning, the white man

THE GODS SPEAK

stepped from the raised platform ready to leave, when he noticed a drum which stood in a corner near the door of the hut, and reached almost to the thatch. 778 346

We had seen many agida drums during our stay in the Saramacca country. Some of them had been half as tall as a man—a round hollowed trunk of a tree, with wooden pegs in the side on which the drumhead was fastened. The agida had no elaborate tuning device such as the other drums carried, and on it was neither the beautiful carving with which the apinti was decorated, nor the white pembadoti of the tumao. The agida was the deep bass voice of every trio of drums which played for the sacred dances, and whatever other rhythms were struck on it, its steady note set the beat about which the more incidental rhythms played. We had been told what seemed fabulous tales of the size of some of these agida drums, but not until we saw the drum which stood in the corner of this shrine to the snake gods did we realize how large they might be. 778 534

The white man glanced about him. The rest of the party had not yet caught up. In the darkness of the shrine there were only the three men. He stepped up to the enormous drum.

"May I tap it?" he asked.

Reaching up, his arm outstretched above his head, he stood on tip-toe before his fingers found the taut head and gently drummed a rhythm there.

"It is large. It must have a deep voice."

"It is a big drum. Would you like to hear it? The man who plays it is near by."

Now there were four in the hut. The drummer spoke. 778

"Do you want to hear the drum, white man? I will play it if you are not afraid. But if I play, I will call the god, and when I call him he will come. Shall I play the drum?" 533 776

The white man asked that the god be called.

The bassia beckoned to the white woman to come, and signed to the others to remain outside. Framed in the low doorway, shutting out the glare of the sun-swept clearing, were the crouching bodies of women and children who

REBEL DESTINY

778 peered into the inner darkness, the whites of their eyes
533 moving with the movements of the strangers.
776

Gently the drummer laid the great cylinder of wood flat on the ground, and from the thatch took down a hard-wood stick, dark and smooth with use. The drum filled more than half of the wall near which it lay. Stooping, the drummer began to call the Vodun gods. It was the rhythm we had heard from across the river early in the morning. The drumming had sounded low and distant then, but in this small enclosure the volume of sound was deafening. It seemed to be pushing against the yielding woven walls, pushing outwards and up.

The rhythm was disturbingly irregular. There was, in the sense of the steady rhythms of the dances, no rhythm at all, and this uncertainty of beat added to the volume of sound racked the listeners. When we thought we heard a repetition of an interval, a sudden change in tempo brought us up with a start. On and on the man struck the drumhead, sounding the heavy beats with the stick, while with his free hand he kept up a running fire of obbligation to the message for the god.

The heads in the doorway began to move nervously this way and that as the message to the god continued, when suddenly they disappeared behind someone who was coming at a run. A moment later Dida was in the hut.

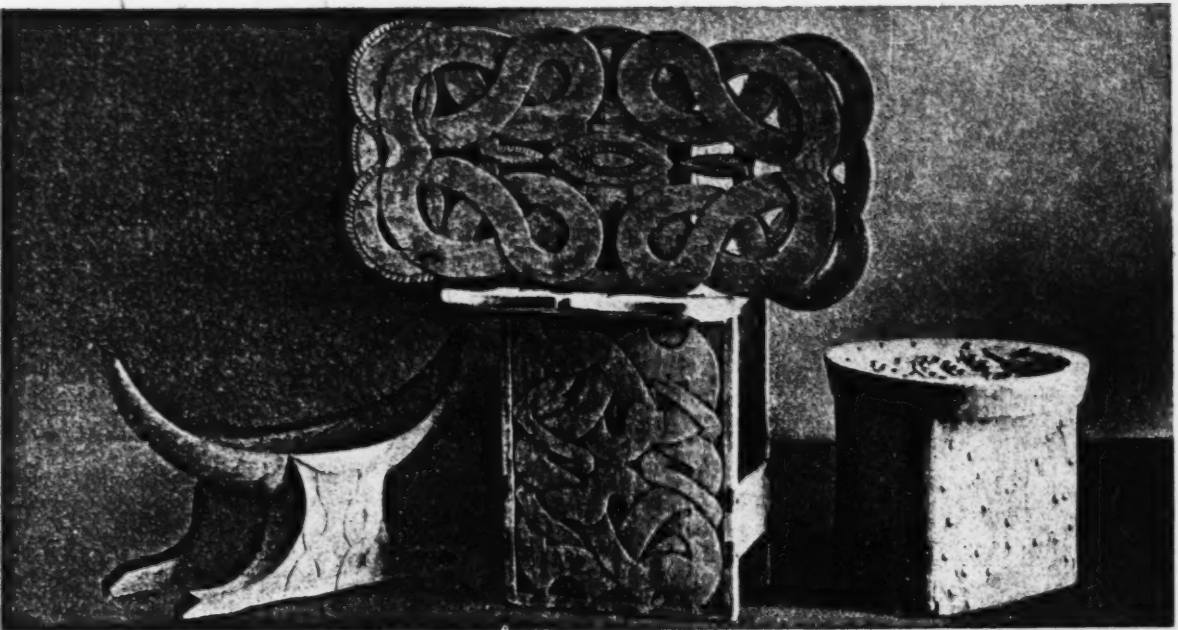
787 She was again possessed. Her body shook with the intensity with which she experienced her god, and her eyes glowed with a steady fire. Back and forth she paced, and when the drum had sounded, she addressed herself to it, listening for its voice and answering, listening again and answering in tones which grew more and more harsh. Then she turned to us, and began to chant

[539]

*"I am the god Keskia
From back of the prison,
From the French shore,
I come.
I am the god Keskia."*

1st Herkovits & Herkovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Sardinia



~ Ceremonial benches incised with symbols of fertility and magic.

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[Facing p. 272]

REBEL DESTINY

531 The greater part of these carvings men made for women, and it was a rare woman who did not take pride in the excellence of the carvings given her, though often it must have been the pride in something which had traditional value, for it would be false to assume that among any people are all men equally endowed with creativeness and all women with sensitive appreciation of what is created.

462 As among so many peoples, two or three types of art were to be found. There was the same sex division in the art of these people as existed in all other aspects of life, and the men were the wood carvers. The sharpest division in the art of the men was that between the secular and the religious. The religious art was crude. A block of wood, roughly shaped, with several cuts to indicate a face, perhaps a break in the line to represent the neck, and a few more strokes in the wood to differentiate the upper part of the woman's body, and there stood an ancestral image, or a village god. Often white clay was added to this, and sometimes alternate stripes of white and red, or white, red, and black, but when seen on a village path underneath a low open shelter, what color there once was had become weathered to a dull gray. The sacred art also included the charms called obias, worn on the neck, and about the upper arm, or wrist, or below the knee, or at the ankle. Many of these made pleasing ornaments. The white fiber dipped in red clay became a deep golden brown as the sun paled the crimson, and there would be the added color of a finger's length of blue and orange parrot feather, fastened inside the woven fiber square, and extending below the fringe of the weave. Into this woven square cowries might be sewn, two facing each other, or three, or four.

532 There was also the art of modeling, but this was so secret and so specialized that we were assured that not even all Bush Negroes knew of its existence, and modeled objects appeared only in the most important of the shrines.

With the religious art might also perhaps be grouped the red and white striped crooked sticks of the Kromanti

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and it was they who in dream or vision, or in a state of possession, instructed living men in the ways of yet greater and greater obia. But there were those who held that obia ranked after the greatest of the deities, that obia surpassed the power of the ancestors, for obia knew how to make "yorka tapu"—preventives against troublesome ghosts, and obia men could summon the dead to enter the body of a living man to make revelations.

Whatever the position of obia in the supernatural world, its place on earth was to serve man, for of all living beings, man alone knew obia.

2

What were the manifestations of obia in the life of the Bush Negro as we found them?

A black pot with its magic powers was an obia pot, the charm worn about the neck was called an obia, the medicines we gave the natives for their eyes or their cuts were called white man's obia, and their own mixture of weeds steeped in water, which stood in the burning sun gathering a green scum until it should be ready for use, was also obia. Young Yamati who had danced susa for us did not have a cord about his neck, but, he had assured us, he had obia for long life as did his partner Sabape, though his own could not be seen, since it consisted of several obia cuts made shortly after birth, which served instead of the cord. The strings about the waists of children were obias. The slight cuts to be noticed on men's arms, on thighs, below the knee, below the shoulder blades were obia cuts, too.

Nor was that all.

Bayo had said to us, "When obia comes a man does bad things. He destroys. When mine comes, it is ugly sometimes."

It was obia, too—Apanto's obia—which had stopped our phonograph, and obia again, invoked this time by Bayo, which had strengthened the spirit of the machine.

We talked about obia to an elder, a village head, from one of the down-river settlements, which was not, however,

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776 important enough to be the residence of a clan chief. His
789 clan's magic was strong, and, being well past middle age,
he could afford to speak of these matters with the whites,
for like all Bush Negroes he was proud of the black man's
obia.

"Ya-hai, white man, obia may well puzzle you. It is no
small matter. No man knows all there is to know about
obia. The greatest of obia men is never done learning. You
say you spent more than twenty years learning your kind
[791] of work. Twenty years is nothing. All his life an obia man
spends learning. The ancestors let him see a little at a time,
and a little more. 'One step at a time,' as the G'ama' says.
So it is, white man."

When did the learning begin, we asked him?

869 "In the bush here, children see what we do, and they
796 learn much by watching. They learn to recognize the kind
798 of obias a man wears, they learn to know the names of
obias, and about the *schina*—taboos—that go with the
wearing of obias. That is the beginning." All children knew
that, but only boys could aspire to learn the secrets of obia.

A boy's definite training in these things began with
adolescence. The ceremony was not formal, for it concerned
only the boy and his immediate relatives. When the time
came to teach the novice about the gods, his father and
[604] his mother's brothers met with him, and they held a *krutu*.
Other men also came, men of the village and elders of their
great family. The outsiders sat by and said nothing, while
the instruction was carried on by the father and the boy's
maternal uncles.

881 "First the father gives him his gods, and he tells his son
869 the name of each god and how he must serve him."
796

There were songs to be learned and dances and invoca-
tions; there were the offerings which had to be made, and
the manner of prayer memorized. He was told when he
might call on the god and what names the god bore, for
each god had several names, just as had each human being.
There were many names to learn for the gods—their day
names, their "strong" names.

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756 and how to cure fever, and fio-fio. He is shown how to make
791 obia medicine for lesions of the skin, and for colds, and for
868 diseases of children. He is taught the protective obias for
881 the woman who conceives, and those which help conception,
the obias which keep people safe on the river, and those which guard them in the bush against enemy spirits.

It may be, too, that during this first period of training, the initiate is shown how to trap and treat the snakes from which the snake "cuttee" is made. This cure for snake bite is famous in Suriname among Bush Negroes and whites alike, but the secret of preparing the cuttee is known to the Bush Negroes alone.

[784] While the young man is in training, he may not go with a woman, and there are many more prohibitions which he must observe.

"Not all men can become obia men."

"Does a man need obia in order to have Kromanti?" we asked.

"To have Obia Kromanti, yes. . . . Now do not ask about Kromanti, white man," said Bayo's uncle with a smile. "Only a Kromanti man knows about Kromanti. Do not ask, because I cannot tell you."

5

789 Men and women constantly drifted to our base camp with
439 carvings for our collection. Many brought us obias. Some
778 of these obias they took from their persons and sold to us,
but others were newly made for us, for some of those they themselves wore, they would not part with, whatever the inducement.

"Why do you want my obia, white man?" a Bush Negro asked one day. "Do you want an obia to carry you well to your country? I will make one for you, but do not ask for mine. Mine has kept me in good health. I cannot give away an obia which has served me well. The spirits would be angered."

He returned after a day with one which resembled his own, and as he gave it, he placed it on the upturned palms

SARAMACCA OBIAS

of the white man and blew on it, drawing both his hands lightly over the hands which held the obia. When he had done this, he whispered its tchina. 789
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"Do not let the obia come near a menstruating woman, and do not eat the meat of the crab." [641]
[642]

Types of obias varied. Some were of fiber twisted into a cord and woven into bands to fit an arm or a leg, some were worn around the neck, and ended with a few cowries and a bell or a black sack with cowries sewn on them or some bristles and a brilliant bit of a parrot's feather. There were also the plain bands of iron, the Kromanti obias worn by men.

One of the most interesting obias was the coffin obia. It was not to be worn casually, as were all the others we had heretofore acquired. When our cook saw this one he paled.

"Mi Gado," he cried, and then turned to the English at his command to give us a warning which would not be understood by those who stood near. "What you got there? Put that away! You wan' fo' die?" Nor would he come near it until it was well out of sight.

It was, we saw, best hidden, if we wanted to continue our course up the river.

The man who had sold it had himself impressed us with its potency. "This obia is strong. . . . Look, it is made of cedar, the same wood from which we make the big coffins, and it is wrapped in the cloth we use to cover the coffin in which the dead man lies. Now that you have the power which is in the obia, I can tell you that the black on it is the soot from the fire, the white is pemba, and the inside ring is woven from the maripa palm. It will carry you well on the river. Nothing can harm you when you already carry your coffin with you." [764]

The logic of his last remark was not so convincing to the whites as it was to the obia man, but it seemed unwise to question him about it.

"To keep it strong, you must spray it with rum twice a month. When the moon is full you must do it, and again

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789 before the new moon comes, and when you do this, you
718 must say,
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[539] "Obia-o,
Your spirit must stay,
Your power must not leave this.
Do not go elsewhere,
Do not become defiled."

789 There was the obia on which Bayo had lavished all the
718 magic he could command so that his friends might be
safe in the bush. From the sacred grass known as *s'a*—the
same grass from which the woven ceremonial dancing
skirts are made here on the river—he made several long
lengths of twine. These he wove into a square which later
became the pendant of this neck obia. On this, as a base,
he sewed two cowries facing each other, and in the middle
of the fringed border of this pendant he fastened a bit of a
macaw's feather, blue and orange in color.

[115] The twisted cord about the neck had several knots in it
where the cord met the pendant. Tying is the symbol of
attaching, of binding, so that if an invocation was uttered
in the making of these knots, and the twine was then
drawn taut, the power was certain to be lodged inside the
knots. Then, too, knots form links, and links, whether they
be in a metal chain or in fiber or wood, symbolize union,
and any object or ornament with links is, therefore, much
valued in bush and in town. A linked chain is a favorite
gift to please the akra, the soul, among the coastal Negroes.
[832] A woman who wishes to attach her man to her will rise at
night noiselessly and will knot a hair from the man's head
three times, speaking her invocation. In the bush few obias
are found which do not have several knots in them.

In his exuberance Bayo placed so many prohibitions on
this finely woven obia, that we asked him if he could not
nullify some of them.

184 "For very strong obias, we have many tchina. It is best
189 so, because no one who wants to harm you will guess all
of them and so succeed in robbing the obia of its power.

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But if the tchina are too difficult to observe, then the man who made the obia can take the tchina away." 784
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Suiting his action to the word, Bayo took some water from the river into his mouth and, spraying it over the obia, said, "The tchina I gave you, I take away. The breaking of these tchina must no longer defile you or take away your power."

There was nothing more hateful to the gods and the spirit of obia than an unclean woman, yet if an obia man wished, he could instruct the power in the obia not to take offense at unintentional contacts with menstruating women, or at cloths belonging to such women, or at food prepared by such women. But to accomplish this, an obia man had to be very powerful and, even so, he could not feel sure that the obia spirit would countenance such violations indefinitely. 784
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All of these personal obias had definite attributes. One was made to guard an individual on the water, another in the bush. There were obias for successful hunting and fishing, for being safe against the evil spirits at the crossroads, for slander, and for envy. One obia saw to it that the soul remained strong, another that no illness sent by an enemy might lodge itself in the body of the wearer; there were love obias, and fighting obias, and obias which kept ghosts away. 789
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Yet whatever such obias were made of, the object in itself had no validity. A simple fiber with a jaguar's tooth attached to it might well have greater powers for safety in the bush than an elaborately wrought obia, whose maker had not a strong obia spirit to give it spiritual power. Without this supernatural potency, it would be like a village god that had been allowed to rot because of itself it was merely a block of wood, and the deity for whom it had been made had not come to animate it.

6

Long ago, the Anansi stories tell us, there was a bird that knew obia. The cries of this bird shook all the kingdoms 773

REBEL DESTINY

1713 of the earth. In one kingdom, a ruler sent the heralds to proclaim throughout the land that he who killed the bird would get half his kingdom, and his daughter in marriage. Anansi, the spider, killed a hawk and brought it to the ruler. But Anansi lied when he said this was the bird that shook the earth with its cries. At the very time he was trying to persuade all the people that this was the bird, the cries of the ominous bird were heard. So they put Anansi in jail. Now one day there was born to a woman a child who at birth wore a cloth of pieced designs, and a hunting sack. This boy said to his mother, he said, "Give me a little water, mother, and I will go out into the world to learn wisdom. God has sent me to kill the bird which troubles mankind."

When the boy grew to manhood he succeeded in trapping this bird that knew how to cook obia without fire. He killed the bird and took the obia pot with him, and that is how he came by the secrets of obia. He passed on his knowledge to the men of his family, and this has been going on till today, so that obia is being spread throughout the world by the descendants of this man who killed the bird that knew obia.

1716 But obia was not one thing only.
"Obia," Bayo's uncle had said, "is first of all the spirit. It is everywhere. But there are many kinds of obia. There is black man's obia, and there is white man's obia. Here in the bush black man's obia is the strongest."

1789 "A man who has the obia spirit makes obia to wear, and
1788 obia to drink, and obia to rub the body with, and obia water
1716 for bathing. He can make obia drums and obia benches. The spirit tells you how to do things, and it tells you what to do. When we say a man has strong obia, we mean his spirit is strong."

1756 The Bush Negro obia man, said Bayo to us one day, knew
1751 the things the white doctor knew—he knew how to heal—
1789 and he knew other things, too. He knew how to keep sickness away. The things an obia man gave for healing were

Chapter XVIII

"OBIA COMES!"

I

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778 WHITE and gaunt and staring in the dim light, the Kromanti Mama rested on its whitened bench, and about it coiled a snake modeled from the same sacred clay.

It had come to us in stealth, and as we responded to the awe it inspired, we could not but wonder what had prompted the man who had brought it to reveal one of the most secret religious objects known to his people. He came late one night, his burden carefully wrapped so that no one might suspect what he carried. That night only, while in whispers he told us what it was and wherein lay its powers, was it out of those wrappings, for not alone during the remainder of our stay in the bush but while we were in the city, we were careful to respect the man's trust.

"When you take it to your white man's country, and some man sees it who has a Tiger spirit, he will shout the cry of the tiger. All who have Tigri are related. Wherever the Kromanti Mama goes, there the Tigri obia goes, too."

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776 Obia, we were told, came into the world to heal and to warn and to protect mankind. Of all obia, Kromanti is the strongest. Why, then, is the Kromanti obia so feared?

The clue to an answer to this question lies in the behavior of the men to whom this obia comes when they are possessed with it. The man who is actuated by Kromanti obia is

"OBIA COMES!"

us, with its attendant bench and modeled snake, we had only heard the term.

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In the dim light of our oil lantern, we listened and wrote in our book, while our informant told us about the Kromanti Mama.

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"You must take it down carefully," he said, "or it might harm you."

The figure on the top of the bench was named Agbo. This was the watchman, and to this figure came news of all impending evil. About the neck of the figure was a Kromanti fighting obia. A stout iron ring, with red and blue cloth tied about one-half of it, it rested near the base of the watchman.

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The eyes of this watchman were its most arresting feature. They were represented by deep sockets, and the effect was heightened by the beak-like character of the nose. Two ears completed the head, and on the body breasts were modeled. It was the only piece of Bush Negro modeling we had ever seen. This most secret of art forms was evidently little practiced.

"The watchman sees all," said our informant, "the Kromanti Mama knows when there is something about that will harm. She tells the snake."

Coiled about its base, this snake was treated in the same realistic style. The head of the snake and its tail almost met at the side of the clay figure which it encircled.

"His name is Bimbawai," we were told.

The bench itself was not unlike the obia stools we had seen in the shrines of the gods. Its rectangular top, curving toward the center, was fastened to the two boards which formed the legs. Like other obia stools, it was difficult to tell whether, under the thick coating of white clay, the wood was carved or not. In one respect it differed from all others we had seen—the bench wore, fringe-like, a grass skirt of the kind worn by the *komfo*, the priests. This was suspended from the top of the bench, the cord going outside

[352]

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789 the space where the snake was modeled, but never touching
798 it.
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The man who was explaining the bench to us pointed once more to the snake. "It is not always lifeless as you see it here," he said.

When the snake came to life, trouble was brewing. It turned red, the color of blood, and all who came into the Kromanti house and saw it were warned of danger.

"How does the snake know when to come to life?"

[794] "It is Agbo, the guard, who tells the snake. When she tells him there is trouble, he turns red, and then we know."

Immunity as well as knowledge was afforded by the magical powers of this stool and its snake and the Kromanti Mama.

"A man who has Kromanti sits down on the stool, and puts Agbo on his head, and when he has done that, nothing can harm him."

[795] Thus is safety attained. But this only comes if the image has been propitiated by the Kromanti men. Rum, not of the sweet kind, must be offered it and prayers transmitted to its spirit on the drum which Kromanti recognizes—the apinti. If this is done, the Kromanti Mama will not lose its power, and the snake will continue to turn the warning color when danger threatens, and the bench will give protection to the men who have the Kromanti obia.

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796 Not long after we had entered the bush we saw our first Kromanti dance. The people of several neighboring villages came to our base camp to dance for us. They asked, "Will you be afraid if the dancing brings Kromanti?" We told them we should welcome whatever spirits came.

[797] Late that afternoon canoes brought people to our encampment for the festivities. Some, with an eye to trade, had brought carvings and obias, and, as we sat and talked with them about what should be given for the pieces they offered us, we could watch the dance outside our open hut.

576 *bah?*" In other words, "Brother, (Sister, Father, Mother)
howdy, how-do-you-do?"

751 There is a ceremony connected with the simple act of en-
776 tering a Bush Negro town. A stranger might bring in foul
intentions or evil spirits. The village must be protected against
this horrific possibility, so nearly every path leading to the
town has a magic device, known as an *azang pau*, to keep the
spirits out. It consists of a dry stick across the path overhead,
to which palm fronds are lashed. They hang down, brushing
over everyone who passes beneath. The visitor passes under
the *azang pau*, and is cleared of evil spirits that might harm
the inhabitants of the village.

The Djukas have invisible enemies. On either side of the
● [578] path, near the palm barrier, is the wooden statue of a fetish
to provide protection from these enemies. The fetish named
Cromanti, on one side, protects the village from the evil
spirit that dwells in the silk-cotton tree, the *con con dree*.
Opposite him stands *Aflamu*, who secures the village against
the attacks of a mighty tribe of unseen men, who are the
sworn enemies of the Bush Negro and kill him with invisible
arrows.

Walking up from the river we reach the barrier, and pause
before it for the customary ritual. But Abaisa is a potent
chief, the head of his *lo* or clan, the *Abaisa-lo*. So long as the
bakhra accompanies him, no ceremony is necessary. We enter
unchallenged into the clearing beyond.

648 The usual procedure is for the white man to hang back and
576 let his paddler precede him. Moi-Man gains admittance to re-

The Jungle Clearing

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mote villages in this way; carrying his paddle before him, as ⁶⁴⁸
a symbol of voyaging, he approaches the barrier or azang pau, ⁵⁷⁶
halts before it, and clears his throat loudly. The rest remain
some thirty feet behind. Someone comes out of the huts and
inquires what is wanted.

One of the objects of the expedition being the acquisition of
specimens of Bush Negro art objects, this is usually explained
at the very beginning to prevent any misunderstanding. The
following dialogue is typical:

"*Bahkra wanny timbeh (or sanni)*"—"White man wants
wood carvings."

Cannily, the black replies: "*Me no habbe fu selli*"—"I don't
have any to sell."

Moi-Man, accepting this verdict, explains further: "*Bahkra
wanny luku, wan pekcin*"—"White man wants to look
around, wants to see inside a bit."

"*Ah bon,*" the Negro replies, meaning: "It's good." He
returns to his hut.

The parley formally concluded, the paddler turns around ³⁶¹
and motions us to come up the trail into the village. The
towns usually consist of a clearing a few hundred feet across,
beyond which is the overhanging green wall of trees. Scat-
tered about the clearing in no particular order are numerous
huts, with an occasional palm or breadfruit tree beside them.
The rest of the concourse is bare clay. Sometimes there is a
flower garden in the centre. Here and there are tiny *God* ^[778]
houses, where the fetishes stand.

The villages vary greatly in size. Some, like Gansee, near

301 his much-loved ornamentation. Leg-bands of cotton cloth are frequently worn by both sexes, and where wire can be secured it is fashioned into arm or leg coils and paraded proudly.

[751] Many necklaces and bracelets are used because they constitute magic amulets against evil spirits. Our own bracelets and necklaces can probably be traced back to this same origin.

778 The hair is another means of personal decoration, and therefore it is always dressed with deliberation. Carefully made partings divide the black skull into geometrical designs.

834 Despite the scanty nature of their clothing, the Djukas are quite modest, and never expose themselves. If a bahkra does, they avert their heads. It is a curious reflection on civilized morality that the almost naked blacks possess a large amount of dignified restraint, while the uncomfortably clothed white man is shameless in his nudity.



322 Here and there inside the dark huts can be seen bits of extraordinary wood carving. These are not crude utensils; every stirring-paddle or comb is a work of art worthy of a place in a museum, designed and executed in a way that is far from "primitive." The only way to acquire these objects is to bargain for them in Dutch money or tobacco, or cheap knick-knacks. Among the more distant villages money is use-

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this is bush magic. Around his neck several amulets are ²²⁴ hung, one to enable him to find the game, another to keep ⁷⁸⁹ him from getting lost, and the third, a small pouch of dried ⁷⁷⁸ leaves, to make him shoot well. With these he takes the game trail behind the village, by the cassava fields where the women are working.

The trail does not last long; he begins to stalk like a black shadow through the bush. Overhead, parrots are cackling noisily, green as the jungle leaves. They eye him suspiciously as he snakes his way noiselessly through the tangled bush. In the dim blue jungle light the game is hard to see. But the Djuka, accustomed to it, approaches the tree where the parrots are. Some fly away.

Down on his haunches, like a Russian dancer, the hunter advances in a squatting position until he is directly underneath. He holds his gun at arm's length, the stock resting not on the shoulder but placed in the palm of his left hand, which is extended in front of him. This is a remnant from the old flintlock days, when the pans would occasionally flash back and burn the side of the face, unless the gun were held practically at arm's length. There is the added advantage of permitting a quicker movement of the barrel over a wide arc, especially when the hunter is crouched in this squatting position. He fires and the body of a parrot comes tumbling down through the leaves.

Accompanying the Djuka hunter is his highly prized hunt- ²²⁴ ing dog—a mangy little terrier. It is stained all over with a ²³¹ red nut-juice to lend it prowess in the pursuit of some par-

The Game Trail

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these animals. So the hunter is occasionally surprised to find²²⁴ a big cat responding to his game call.

Far up the river, jaguars have been known to come near²²⁴ a provision clearing and carry off an infant while the mother¹³⁶ was at work in the cassava field. The grown Djuka, however, is not afraid of these cats. The jaguar is a medium-sized feline, the third largest of the cat family, but it is essentially cowardly. If a lone Negro encounters one on a game trail, a duel commences that usually ends with the shooting of the jaguar. On one occasion we saw a hunter come back from the game trail, armed only with a machete, who had met and killed one of these cats.

There are several smaller cats in the South American jungle, ranging in size from the puma to the diminutive jaguarundi. The boa constrictor is not the menace that some travellers make it out to be. The Bush Negroes will not kill either a boa or an alligator, nor will they allow a white man to do so. If they see the white man aiming his gun at snakes,²²⁵ they will knock up the muzzle. Such reptiles are sacred.⁷⁷⁸
Some of the Indians of the district, on the other hand, are fond of snake meat, and hunt it regularly. But the Bush²⁶² Negroes look down on them.⁸²⁹

In setting traps the Bush Negroes exhibit the typical²²⁴ cunning of jungle dwellers. They have preserved the West African types of traps. Trails on which armadillos forage are set with a shotgun, in the middle of the path. By seizing the bait the animal shoots itself.

At night on the game trail the lone hunter builds a lean-

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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House God, Upper Surinam River. Note hut built to shade the fetish.

[Facing p. 140]

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Djuka

The Djukas may be possessed by almost any spirit. During
 776 the dances they sometimes feel Apuku or Cromanti, as the
 787 case may be. Once a Bush Negro was possessed by the spirit
 of a jaguar. The big buck seized a dog that happened to be
 loitering near by and tore it to pieces with his fingers. After
 a dance a man was seized by the spirit of a rebel leader of the
 old plantation days; he seized a cutlass and began hacking
 and smashing everything around him until the others forcibly
 restrained him.

776 The Bush Negroes do not worship the jungle spirits very
 782 meticulously, but every village has fetishes, usually standing
 ● [778] in little god-houses which are mere sheds to keep off the rain.
 Under the shade of the tiny roof can be seen the stiff visage
 of one of these deities, at times with remnants of food and
 drink at his feet. Beside the food there is usually a paddle for
 the god to eat with, elaborately carved like any food-paddle,
 and smeared with pemba dotee, the sacred white clay. This
 clay is smeared on all religious or ceremonial objects. For the
 individual to hold profitable converse with the gods, he must
 be smeared with it; pemba dotee seems to be a sort of catalytic
 agent between the soul and the deity. This custom is a West
 African survival, and not to be found among the Indians of
 Dutch Guiana.

778 Along the river, also, are occasional shrines where the
 782 Bush Negroes may appease their deities when on long jour-
 neys, or when hunting. The shrine consists of a tall pole
 which may be either festooned or plain. At the base of many
 of the poles are shells, stones, bottles, and pieces of wood, as
 well as food and drink, possibly as a sacrifice. Every village,

Medicine and Magic

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too, has a large pole outside of or in the clearing, which is ⁷⁸² used in praying to the god or to ancestors. The spirits of de-^[778] parted ancestors are invoked frequently and reverently.

Very often, when a man begins to hunt, he will call on the god and his ancestors for aid. The following prayer we heard intoned at the mouth of a creek, where a *gadu* pole was situated, by one of our paddlers who had entered to shoot fish. He clasped his hands, knelt down, and, with eyes closed, grasped the obeiah which was around his neck while he said the following words: "*Mooma nanga Tata nanga Massra Gadu. Me beh you mekki dem luku me kissi fu tru-tru wan anumara*"—"Father and Mother and Mr. God, I beg you make them see (those who do not believe) that I (you will allow me to) surely catch anumara fish."

The Djuka was gone about an hour. He returned with a fish weighing eight pounds. For this occasion he knelt in front of the praying pole and uttered the following prayer of thanks: "*Keh Massra Gadu, gran danke fu you, ala suma go nanga inye uh kun oto nanga bon. Gran danke fu ala den sani, ala den sweeti muflo deh wey kissi. Gimme furu pekein. Gran danke fu you*"—"Oh, Mr. God, many thanks to you for all who go in and come out with good. Many thanks for all things, all good things to eat which we caught. Give me plenty (full of) children. Many thanks."

In almost every village one encounters a wooden post ⁷⁷⁸ thickly smeared with white clay on which is placed an iron ⁷⁸² pot. This apparatus is sometimes under a small thatched roof. ^[755] Certain herbs are put in the vessel in case of sickness. At

778 other points throughout the village, one also sees posts, hav-
782 ing attached to them cross-pieces, from which a length of
white cloth is flying. A few bottles usually stand around at
the base of these posts. Here one comes to address the Gadu
(any divine being), or the spirit of a deceased person, when
one has something to request, or wishes to return thanks
for good luck. This petitioning is accompanied by the pour-
ing of water or strong drink ("high wine" or *sopic* as it is
called by the Bush Negroes) on the ground. One may en-
counter these cross-pieces with the white cloth at almost any
place in the village, as for example, near a sacred tree or on
some of the paths leading to or from the village. We may also
see various *krom-tiki*, sticks or pieces of bush vines which
have grown in a peculiar zigzag fashion. These, too, are sup-
posed to have protective powers against evil.



825 Snakes, excepting the venomous varieties, are held in
778 reverence, and their worship is woven through the whole
religious pattern. If a snake enters a hut, it is not molested,
but allowed to return to the outside. If it shows no disposi-
tion to depart, it is chastised gently with a little broom-like
contrivance and chided for not knowing its proper home.
The bahkra who tries to kill a snake is prevented from doing

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931

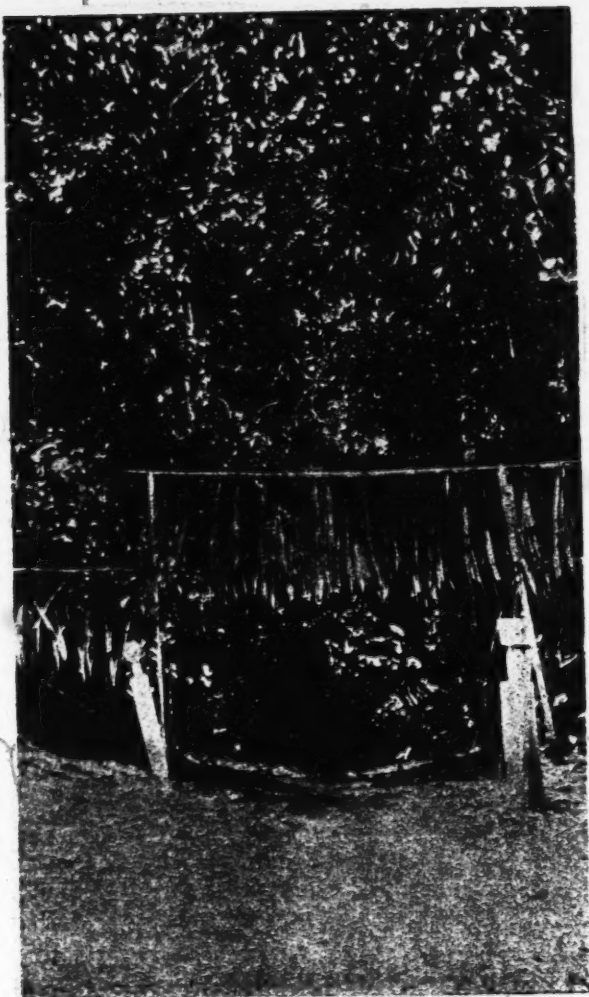
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The Azang Pau. Phantom Barrier Over Paths Leading to Village. Upper Surinam River.

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30. In accordance with the voodoo ceremony, sacrifices of 825 white chickens are occasionally offered to Papa Gadu, the 778 snake god. Sacrifices are especially made to the large land and water boas. Human sacrifices, if they occur, are kept secret from all outsiders. We have no reason to believe in their occurrence.

A most interesting *Winti* dance was witnessed by Mr. 825 Charles de Goeje, leader of the Dutch government expedition 796 to the Tumac-Humac Mountains in 1908. This dance was for the purpose of propitiating the spirit of a snake which had been accidentally burned to death while a provision ground was being prepared for cultivation.

About 10 P. M., Mr. de Goeje relates, the drums began to play furiously. There were two apenti and one large ageedah drum. The people began to sing in an unusual manner, and the wife of one of the headmen, thickly smeared with pemba dotee, sat immovable as an image upon a carved wooden stool. After the drums had gone on for a while, there was heard the exclamation, "*Pour watral*" A man came with a basin; he dipped a palm leaf in it and sprinkled the seated woman while the drums beat furiously. The woman seemed to awaken and began to turn around and around on her stool; she twisted and turned her body sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. When she had reached a high pitch of excitement, she began to dance.

Several other women smeared with pemba dotee rose and took part in the dance. They danced around the long drum, gesturing as if the drum were speaking to them. They then

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severe attack of winti. She fell upon her knees and appeared ⁸²⁵ half lame. The others lifted her up. A youth came with a ⁷⁷⁶ green stick; he bit into it and spat on the woman's calves, ¹⁵⁸ legs, feet, and arms. After a while she was able to stand alone. This seemed to constitute the end of the dance. It had somehow become known that the Papa Gadu, the snake spirit, was angry, and this big *gadu pray* (god's spread) had been necessary in order to propitiate him.

The women who are seized with the winti sometimes mutter a few words. The others regard these as the utterances of a spirit and say: "*Ya, gadu*"—"yes, God." Upon inquiry among the women who had caught the winti spirit, Mr. de Goeje found that they all complained of feeling very dizzy or giddy when in such a trance.



Certain localities, as well as individuals, may be possessed ⁷⁷⁶ by evil spirits. The Pwaba Creek is such a place. Were a ⁷⁵¹ Djuka to go up this creek with any clothing on, he would never come out alive. So upon entering the waters of Pwaba the Djuka strips off all his clothes. That nullifies the bad magic.

Every Bush Negro, to protect himself from all varieties ⁷⁵¹ of black magic, wears a number of charms or amulets. He ⁷⁷⁸

751 calls them *obeiahs*. An obeiah is a charm or a form of magic
 ● 778 to be distinguished from a *trafer*, which is a taboo. Obeiahs
 may be worn in the form of bracelets or necklaces, called *boe*.
 Bush Negroes never start out on a hunting or river trip with-
 out a number of *boe* around the arm, or leg, or neck. Thus the
 machinations of the evil spirits are set at naught.

One *boe* which Abaisa made for us is formed of heavy
 wire wrapped with white cord and set with cowrie shells.
 Worn on the arm, this will make you very strong. The charm
 will protect you while engaged in dangerous doings, such as
 [43] drinking river water after someone has been drowned in it.
 Abaisa made this bracelet out of friendship. It was given, not
 purchased; therefore the old-time gods are not offended at
 its being possessed by a white man.

[712] He presented it with great solemnity, taking a mouthful
 of rum and spitting it on the ground as a libation to the
 ground god, then squirting another mouthful over the brace-
 let. After that we all had a swallow of the same liquid and
 [553] Abaisa said a prayer in *deepee-talkee*. A somewhat similar
 ceremony attended the giving of a Djuka name to the white
 man—*Abentee*, provider.

751 The cowrie shells with which the obeiah is set are smeared
 321 with *pemba dotee*. The clay closes up the openings of the
 778 shells, thus preventing evil spirits from entering into the in-
 terior. These cowrie shells, which decorate practically all the
 [7] magic emblems of the Djukas, are commonly found among
 the savages of Africa, both on the East and West Coasts. They
 are also common in African art work, and at one time con-
 stituted a form of currency, *papa mani*.

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stituted a form of currency, *papa moni*. They come originally from the East Indies, having been brought to both Africa and South America by Portuguese traders. When a savage takes a fancy to a thing, he will go to some trouble to get hold of it. Thus the tin cans of the Standard Oil Company have penetrated into almost every primitive community now known. 778
751
[17]

Projecting from the wrapped cord around Abaisa's boe is a bit of blue cloth to ward off the spirit of a dead enemy. A bit of red cloth blinds the wearer to evil sights and makes him serene. A small strand of white cloth provides protection from the bad spirits called *Bakru*. Underneath the cloth are bristles from the anteater to give strength. All these charms make the obeiah bracelet a powerful affair.

Another boe is used to foretell the future. It is similar to the bracelet, but projecting from the wrapped cord is a short bit of tubing. The device is suspended from a string and held motionless, the tube pointing toward the ground. When no air is stirring a question is asked concerning the future. If the pointer remains motionless the answer is "yes," but if it moves the reply is "no." In this simple way the Bush Negro acquires knowledge of coming events. Our tent boy had several questions he wanted to ask, and when they were answered he had "a peculiar feeling." 778
787

Another obeiah that we obtained is a jaguar-tooth necklace. Strung on the same string with the pierced tooth are two little carved fetishes of Cromanti and *Aflamu*, crudely done. All religious articles are extremely crude in their carving, compared with the delicate tracery of Djuka implement

779 carvings. Still another magic device is a red necklace of macaw feathers, to bring luck in hunting. Another obeiah with [843] a tinkling bell is worn around the neck by pregnant women to tell the unborn child that everything is auspicious in the outside world.

Some of the beliefs accompanying these amulets are odd [774] and child-like. The Djukas think that spirits are afraid of strangers, and flee in terror when a stranger is encountered. The inhabitants of the little town of *Pekein Say* (Talk a Little Bit) have the power to call back hunters who are lost in the bush, a virtue peculiar to these townfolk alone. These curious beliefs persist despite the fact that they could easily be tested and exposed. Any coincidence will strongly reinforce them. Late one evening, going up the river, we came to an Aucaner village and stopped to spend the night. Not liking the looks of the place we told our paddlers to push on to the next village before night. Tired, they grumbled at this. To give weight to our decision we told the blacks that our obeiahs were warning us not to stay, and that it would be dangerous to let this warning pass unheeded. Impressed with the gravity of the warning, they acceded to our wishes. We went on, although not being able to reach the adjacent village in time we were forced to spend the night in the bush.

Later, coming back down the river, we learned that the village we had passed by had held, on that very night, a great and disastrous dance. There had been much drinking of high [579] wine, and, in the drunken and hysterical excitement that [731] followed, half the town was burned down and three men were killed.

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were killed. When we told Abaisa about this, he nodded approvingly, not at all surprised that his obeiah charm had warned us of the impending danger. 778

Other bush beliefs come under the head of *trafers*, or taboos. Primitive behaviour is very largely governed by categorical rules; although the individual is unaware of the origin and purpose of these rules, violation of a taboo is unthinkable. It is *trafer*, for instance, to sit on the ground. This explains the many intricately carved stools in our collection of Djuka art objects. It is also *trafer* for a Bush Negro woman to have intercourse with anyone outside of her own tribe. This was not so in the old days, for Sedman mentions that the white commissioners parleying with the rebel blacks were liberally entertained and provided with women for the night. Such a thing would be *trafer* now. It is taboo to harm the alligator, and if you were, by some unspeakable chance, to kill one, [123] its ghost would return and destroy all the children in your family.

Besides these general taboos, there are personal *trafers* and food taboos that differ for each individual. If one man shoots a sloth (*seloss*) it will spoil his gun, but his brother or his neighbour may kill one with impunity. It is that particular Djuka's *trafer*. Another man may have the turtle as his food taboo. The turtle is a well-known figure in Djuka folklore. The *sacri patu*, also called *logow* and *kaw*, is spoken of as "walking like a sick man." The belief that when a turtle bites a man it will hold on until it thunders, a common belief in parts of rural America, is also found in Djuka land. 825 784

784 These food trasers are sometimes chosen by the individual,
 262 and are acquired also by inheritance. A certain Bush Negro
 [424] got his trafer in this way: His grandmother had a vision,
 757 called *papa ivinti*, and she informed her grandson that she
 had been possessed. This made him feel the spirit of Cro-
 manti. In that bad state he got the *idée fixe* that shooting a
 turtle would be reprehensible and dangerous. This animal
 then became his tabooed food, and for the rest of his life it
 is trafer so far as he is concerned.



797 So far only a slight attempt has been made to Christianize
 the Djukas. The Catholics and Moravian Brothers have es-
 tablished mission stations at a few points along the rivers.
 Their efforts at conversion appear on the whole to be unsuc-
 cessful. The Bush Negroes are converted in small numbers
 and very superficially; in moments of stress they will revert
 back to their jungle deities. The whole spirit of Christian
 customs is foreign to their mode of life. They have the Gran
 776 Gadu, an adequate enough image of divine power. Their
 782 prayers are sometimes said directly to him, or they pray to
 their ancestors to intercede with the Gran Gadu for aid.
 Sometimes the prayer is said by being beaten out on the tom-
 • [778]tom, for the tomtom is sacred, and the throbs of the great

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931

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Saramaccaner

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Ancestor Shrine. Village of Adawai, Saramaccaner Tribe.

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drums carry farther toward heaven than the talkee-talkee 782
of a lone supplicant. 778

It is not easy to distinguish between the primitive's magic 756
and his medicine. In the village organization a distinction is 793
sometimes made between the *medicine man*, who is concerned with remedies for sickness, and the *obeiah priest*, whose business is charms and rituals. There are two or three obeiah priests to each village. Their profession is the propitiation of spirits, that is, magic and religion. The magic of the obeiah men is largely secret. Once we arrived at a village while a ritual of some nature was going on. Pots were stewing in the centre of the clearing, while obeiah men were moving around them. One held a rattle, which he shook monotonously. The bahkra was asked to leave. It was magic in the making.

The Bush Negroes possess an extensive system of primitive 824
medicine. Various roots, herbs, and nuts are gathered in the jungle, and their use is mingled with various superstitions. The witch doctor or medicine man who prepares infusions 756
from these herbs holds no exalted position in the esteem of the villagers; he is simply following a particular profession to which no special prestige is attached. He may, however, [793]
be an obeiah priest in addition to being a medicine man.

He prepares several kinds of medicine, among them the 756
snakee-kutti, or snake-bite cure. It cures the bites of all rep- 784
tiles and makes the person immune from future attack. 278
Snakee-kutti is made in this way: a venomous snake is killed and the head and the tail-end are cut from the body; the tail

756 is placed in the mouth of the snake and the whole is roasted
789 over a slow fire, along with certain herbs. Incantations ac-
278 company the business. After the materials are thoroughly
charred they are reduced to a homogeneous powder, which
is administered in two ways: first, internally, and second, by
making a small incision in the arm and rubbing some of the
powder into the wound. At first we were inclined to think
that some of the venom might remain in the poison glands
of the reptile's head, and so act as an antigen to set up a real
immunity. But the heat of the roasting fire would probably
destroy any such toxin remaining, leaving the resultant pow-
der non-antigenic.

Even in Paramaribo enthusiastic accounts of the marvel-
lous powers of snakee-kutti are common. It is supposed by
some to have the power of making snakes turn and flee. Be-
ing curious we tried it ourselves, but noticed no effects.

778 Some doctors are skilled in the preparation of a certain
789 strength-giving concoction especially in demand by Bush
Negroes before a fight. If by the following day the combat
has not taken place, the man who swallowed the medicine
must get it out of his system by hacking viciously at a tree
with his bush-knife; otherwise he will become ill.

According to Abaisa, men who drink this magic potion
sometimes become so strong that with one blow of the
machete they can make all the leaves of a tree fall off.

Bathing is another way of acquiring extraordinary strength.
Three baths in water infused with *bimbe* leaves will give a
man the power to pick a red-hot axe-head out of the midst

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of a burning fire without being harmed. Bathing every day for nine days in water in which rusty scrap iron and peanut husks have been boiled renders a man impervious to the cut of a knife and his flesh capable of turning any blade. Stomach-ache is treated by drinking an infusion from the hollow handle of a dance rattle. Especially potent in all magic preparations are the bristles of *tamanua*, the anteater. *Obeiah watra*, another infusion, is drunk by men before going into the bush, to give them luck and strength. It is also possible to acquire strength or other virtues by rubbing one's body with the putrescent fluid gathered from the corpse of a dead man who possessed those qualities.

If a person should find fecal material in front of his hut or rotten eggs along the trail in such position as to make it likely for him to step upon it, it is certain that this material was placed there by a member of the community who is attempting to *wissi* or bewitch him. Anyone who removes this matter is liable to insanity.

Minor cuts and wounds may be treated with the bark of the *aproconyo* tree. This is ground up and mixed with the brew prepared from the leaves known as *pekein fol caca* (little rooster).



164 The Djukas suffer from a number of diseases also common among white men. Yaws, a syphilis-like disease, caused by infection with *Spironema pertenue*, is frequently found among them. Individuals may be seen suffering from all three stages of it. Malaria, including the severe tropical form, is spread by the mosquitoes along the rivers. An ulcerous condition known as leishmaniasis, the result of infection by Leishman-Donovan bodies, is an ordinary occurrence, as is hookworm. The Town Negroes are occasionally infected with filariasis and schistosomiasis of the rectal type. Leprosy is present in the town of Paramaribo, but we saw none of it in the bush.

648 The Djukas do not fear to take the bahkra's medicine. The
757 gratitude of more than one mother was earned when we gave
[515] her child castor oil. Of the principle of asepsis, naturally, the
[304] Djukas know nothing. Their incisions for making *cutty-cutty* (ornamental scars) are septic enough to give a bacteriologist nightmares.

On one occasion, snakee-kutti, the snake protector, did not work, and a Bush Negro, who had been bitten was taken to the hospital at Moengo. His leg had gone untreated for five days and was in the serious stage of gangrene. The limb was amputated by the doctor in charge and the Djuka made an uneventful recovery. He would not have been brought to the hospital by his family if there had been anything more for the Bush Negro medicine man to do. But there was not, and they went to the bahkra as the last resort to save his life.

● 778 Far up the Surinam River is the sacred medicine city of
756 Dahomey (pronounced Daumay). Into its sacred precincts

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the white man has never been allowed to enter. A spirit⁷⁷⁸ named *Hini* hovers over the town, and it is he, not the⁷⁵⁶ Djukas, who would be offended by the presence of a bahkra. People seriously ill are brought to Dahomey from the surrounding villages. The witch doctors there, old women as well as old men, and occasionally a virgin, administer their potent charms. Only young married women are debarred from the profession of medicine among the Djukas.

Here also comes the Granman of the Saramaccaner tribe, to undergo the sacred ritual before making his annual visit to Paramaribo. He receives absolution from the Dahomey^[643] medicine men in preparation for his sojourn among the^{783]} bahkras. The ceremony is known as *makee suka*, or putting himself in favour with the gods.

Our friend Abaisa, headman of Lombe, tells us something⁷⁵⁵ of the Dahomey rituals. To mend a broken bone the patient is shut up in a small hut with the doctor and three white cocks. The first fowl is killed by having its neck wrung, the blood from its beak running on the floor of the hut as a sacrifice to Amu, the ground god. The second fowl is cut open for inspection. If the bladder is light in colour the prognosis is good, but if dark the reverse is the case. The third cock has its leg bone broken at a point approximately corresponding to the patient's fracture. After this both the fowl and the human patient undergo daily treatment at the hands of the doctor, to the accompaniment of prayers to Amu and the shaking of rattles to scare off the evil spirits. The nature of the treatment could not be ascertained, but on the day when

755 the cock is able to stand up and crow the patient is said to be cured.

787 The killing of the white rooster and inspection of its bladder are performed also in order to foretell the future in other than healing situations. There are several methods of prophesying. In one of them a plank is supported on the heads of two men, and on it are placed various little bundles. A third man stands before the plank and asks questions while the men bearing the plank jump up and down. The Gadu (the spirit in the bundles) is supposed to reply with a yes or no, as indicated by the way the bundles on the plank move. The questions are put metaphorically and in such a way as to exclude the possibility of the plank bearers deliberately influencing the answers. After one man has asked several questions, the bearers run with the plank to another part of the village where further questions are put to it. The carrying [463] of this plank seems to be the prerogative of certain individuals, and only certain others understand the making of the bundles and the correct placing of them.

● 778 Not even Mynheer Wolff, who has lived among the Bush Negroes for many years and undoubtedly commands their profound respect, has been permitted to enter Dahomey. The headman or captain of Dahomey, interestingly enough, is named Songai. There is a district on the West Coast of Africa still known today as Songhay. The name is the remnant of a great Negro empire that once flourished in North-West Africa, near the Sahara Desert. This empire is thought to have had universities and astronomical observatories, wealth

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and pageantry. Now it is only a name. But the name has been 778●
carried overseas to the South American bush, and persists
there long after its origin has been forgotten.



As has already been noted, the villages are universally 364
clean and sanitary. There is no filth or debris scattered about.
The garbage is disposed of by being thrown into the river
at a point below the village. A small amount of it is fed to
the chickens, which we found in practically every Bush
Negro village. Feces are disposed of in small outhouses made
of leaves placed on bypaths some four hundred yards from
the village clearing. When these become seriously polluted,
they are removed to another location. Some villages have no
outhouses.

Bathing is indulged in frequently by all of the Bush Ne-515
groes. There are few who do not bathe in the river two or
three times a day. No bodily odour could be detected on
them, except one of perspiration, when the men poled their
canoes for long distances and did not have time to bathe at
their accustomed hours.

Sometimes as a punishment a woman may be condemned 681
to act as scavenger for the village for as long as two years;
it is then her duty to be continually cleaning up the village.

West African Survivals

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torchlight. The Djukas have a rodent trap that is a direct African survival, found on both the West and East Coasts of Africa. [224]

Stedman mentions in his *Narrative* that the Bush Negro rebels used a kind of conch-shell trumpet to call their people to arms. The same species of trumpet is still to be found among the Djukas, and is similar in type to those found on the Gold Coast. The nose flute used by the Bush Negroes also comes from the Congo region of Africa. Wooden trumpets like those used by the Bush Negroes are found also along the Gold Coast and in the Congo country. 177 534

The drums form perhaps the clearest and most characteristic West African survival. They are not at all like the Indian drums of the same region, which are flat and more like a tambourine. The Djuka manner of constructing them from a hollowed-out log, with skin stretched over the opening and thonged over pegs, is commonly in use among innumerable African tribes. The tuning of them by hammering on the pegs, set at an angle, is also a detail from Africa. The use of drums for communication over long distances, and the development of an elaborate code of drum signals, is developed to a high degree among West African tribes. Rattray, in his study of the Ashanti people, gives an extended description of this. [202]

The *anansi-tories*, the spider stories, ubiquitous in the West Indies, are also found among the Tshi-speaking peoples of the West Coast. The use of white clay for smearing ceremonial objects and amulets is African. The decoration of [778]

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obeiahs, house gods, fetish houses, menstrual huts, and matri-
 lineal system of inheritance are all to be found as ancient
 customs among the forest tribes of the West Coast. Other
 details, such as the use of chickens for sacrificial animals,
 the huts with their rectangular walls, the manufacture of
 butter from the palm worm, the sacredness of snakes and
 alligators, the use of drums for religious supplication, and
 the beating of them with the hand instead of with a stick
 as the Indians do, are also customs which are similar to
 West African customs and probably derived from them. The
 impaled turtle-shell on a staff, the badge of the witch doctor's
 profession, represents the symbol for the female genitalia
 among some West African tribes. The Bush Negroes' boats
 and paddles are typically African in design. The *awasa* dance
 of the Saramaccaners was borrowed from the Aucaners,
 among whom it is a direct West African survival.

From the study of these culture survivals among the Djuka
 tribes it can be seen that most of the jungle civilization of
 the Bush Negroes is derived from their West African an-
 cestry, modified here and there by contact with the Indians
 of their new home. The remainder of the material culture
 of the Bush Negroes is borrowed from the white settlements
 along the coast, from which gunpowder, fish-hooks, bush-
 knives, and other articles filter upstream.

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Primitive Art

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for benches, no pieced specimens are ever found. Because³²²
of the practical necessity of having a large number of benches,
and the difficulty of executing both legs and seat out of a⁵³²
continuous piece of wood, benches are commonly made of [352]
several pieces of wood fitted together, as can be seen in the
photographs. A number of them, however, are made from
a single piece, and this continuity is preferred by the Djukas.
The Africanesque crescent stools are carved from a single log.

Relief work is the second form of decoration. It occurs⁵³²
in the form of high relief on the plates and trays. It can be
found to a modified degree on door-posts and other carved
objects. Ornaments in low relief are represented by the cala-
bash pieces, which are carved when green and allowed to
dry.

Branding is done with a hot knife or wire, or else the
piece may be charred by holding it in the flames. Circles
are burned into the pattern by heating empty cartridge shells
red hot and pressing them against the wood. Brass up-
holstery tacks, obtained in the white settlements of Para- [177]
maribo and Albina, are in especial favour, and some pieces
are heavily laden with these. They fit in very well with the
general spirit of Djuka art, and although the material is
anachronistic, the effect is not.

Religious carvings, unlike the practical implements, are⁵³²
executed with a crudeness that is surprising. The fetish to⁷⁷⁸
the god Aflamu which was brought back to the Museum is
nothing more than a rough section of pole with a crudely
hewn face and seeds for eyes. Other religious pieces are

532 likewise roughly done. The reason for this seems to derive
● 778 from the general nature of primitive religion as it occurs
among the Bush Negroes. Two explanations of this were
given by native informants. If the god is a good god, and
well disposed toward the black man, he doesn't care whether
his fetishes are well executed or not. If he is a bad god he
is going to continue to be bad, regardless of whether much
time is spent on his fetishes or not. Another Bush Negro,
questioned about this, said: "Me no sabby de Gadu luku"—
"I don't know what God looks like." The primitive æsthetic
feeling, apparently, is bound up with practical ends. There is
absolutely no care or pains taken with religious objects,
whereas erotic objects are finished with great skill.

322 There seems to be considerable variation between the tribes
184 of Djukas in the character of their art work. The Aucaner
532 wood carvings have, in general, a more refined and delicate
cast than the wood carvings of their neighbours, the Sara-
maccaners and Boni. The differences in treatment of the
motifs among the Bush Negro tribes and the general dis-
similarities and likenesses of the carvings are best understood
by consulting the accompanying illustrations.

412 The combs vary from two and a half inches to twenty-
322 four inches in length, and even these more immense combs
see actual service. They are always made of a single piece,
including the tines. For the most part they are made of
harder woods, with occasional inlays. A number of them are
trick pieces, with little ingenious devices that catch and hold
the imagination of the primitive. For comparison, a West

/13 cont. /

796
[782] committed. This feast, at which pigs and poultry are sacrificed, must last for four weeks and thus ends with the following new moon. They pray, dancing and singing, while from time to time they kneel in order to ask for blessings.

• [778] In the place where their idol stands they plant long sticks in the ground at certain intervals, on which they let flutter a number of long narrow strips of white cotton in the manner of flags.

[781] They celebrate this feast, for which no costs are spared, with all possible solemnity; it is attended by old and young and is very important among them.

Chapter IX

Conceptions about Death and Eternity

775 They believe that at death the existence of the human being ends, but that the spirit of the deceased does not disappear altogether and remains among them for a long time. Also they believe in unlucky spirits, which, as a result of an earlier evil life, must wander about restlessly, while the life on earth of the peaceful spirits is supposed to have been free of misdeeds.

They do not assume rewards in the hereafter for good deeds; /14/ misdeeds, however, in their opinion, are punished with restless wandering about.

[755] They say that those spirits know all that happens, and that they can come in contact with them at their feasts, that they receive many a hint and information, and through concealed signs come to know remedies against diseases, to which they attach the fullest confidence.

Chapter X

Marriage and Marital Life

584 Their marriages take place with few ceremonies. Frequently young men and even men ask pregnant women, in case they should bring a daughter into the world, to designate that girl as their wife,

/35 cont. /

123 Also, I am led to believe that for me they cherish a
 466 more than general respect, since already for ten years now they
 have been faithful workers for me, a privilege to which no
 inhabitant in this colony other than myself can lay claim.

123 A family among them, whose head recently died --
 • 778 according to their statements, through poisoning, which misdeed
 [761] is supposed to have taken place out of envy, since I gave him
 preference above others, which he deserved on account of his
 faithfulness and industry -- has built a hut in the vicinity of its
 idol signs, in which they placed a crude image cut out of cedar-
 [237] wood and painted with white paint. Beside that image they
 placed a little table and on it laid a number of quill feathers from
 the pouwies (1), a little bottle with black liquid, symbolizing ink,

1. A pheasant, the Crax alector L.

as well as some slips of paper. Near this little table they dug a
 number of steps into the ground, and at the lowermost step they
 made a gutter that runs in the direction of the river. Now when
 they have a festival with dancing and they want to pay respect
 to me, they place near it a number of children who constantly
 pour water brought in jugs, which, flowing down the steps into the
 gutter, streams riverward. While this ceremony takes place, songs
 in my honor are sung by the festive crowd.

[822] Now the image, according to their conception, is sup-
 [829] posed to be a representation of me, /36/ the white color the sign
 that I am a white, while the quills, paper, and ink are the attributes
 of the Whites' higher civilization, the streaming water that I stem
 from the colonists who have come here from across the sea.

123 The wife of the headman referred to above came to me
 589 in the town shortly after the death of her husband and remained to
 choose my household as her permanent residence, to which I
 gladly consented. Faithful and considerate, she performs not only
 a great many household services, but even anticipates in this re-
 spect the wishes of my wife, and out of love for us refuses any
 monetary compensation.

343 [For information on various types of buildings and other physical structures or facilities
346 present in each of the Boni villages, see the village plans on pp. 66, 68, 70, 72, 74,
and 76, category 116. Included are data on the occurrence of menstrual huts (munu),
396 kitchens, granaries, and sundry other outbuildings, religious structures (gadu), mortuary
485 sheds, boatbuilding yards, guest houses for visitors, wharfs, fraga tiki (i. e. lineage an-
cestor cult shrines and objects), and useful trees within the village area which are per-
504 sonally owned.]

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613 The principle of localization of matrilineal kin groups,
621 each in a separate village, continues respected. However, as in
591 all African populations, the actual structure is noticeably different
from the theoretical organization:

1st. Fragments of paternal kin groups, as well as several small groups of heterogeneous origin, insufficient in number to form a separate unit, have been agglomerated with the lo. Such is the case for example of the Toïna lineage, a small group which fled from Surinam at the end of the 19th century and agglomerated with the Papaïston lo;

[578] 2nd. Scissions have been produced within the lo as a result of disagreements. A group issuing from the Papaïston lo founded Wétiti village in the Lower Maroni beside Apatu. A group issuing from the Kotika lo founded Ma Imma village in the same region. Finally, from the Dipélu II lo a group separated which settled in Asisi. Asisi village is thus in fact nowadays the juxtaposition of three villages: Asisi-Dju, Asisi-Awara Bakka, Asisi-Dipélu II, each having its organization and its separate territory.

[829] These scissions have no appreciable repercussions on the social life of the Boni, for the groups thus separated from the lo, in addition to being very small in numbers, are not recognized by
[1767] the grand man as distinct social units. They remain subject to the head of the lo to which ancestor worship attaches them.

361 Besides the residence villages, a certain number of Boni
613 have personal farming habitations distributed on the lands of their
621 lineage along both banks of the river and on the islands. These habitations designated by the word kāpu, camp, have no permanent character; their existence does not violate the principle of localization of the lineage; each Boni is obliged at least in principle to build a house in his native village and to live in it part of the year.
[1769] The village of origin of each /20/ lineage is called "great village":
• [1778] it is there that the members of the group meet to pray to the ancestors in front of the fraga tiki.

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Fig. 5. Boni Village

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Fig. 6. The fraga
tiki of the Kotika
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/12 cont. /

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241 The grand man acts as land head for the whole of the tribe. It is he who has the care of the sanctuary of mama g33 and who prays each year in the presence of a large gathering of people for the fertility of the soil.

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782 The grand man is the priest of Odun, divinity whom the Boni regard as avenger of offenses against moral and religious law; by virtue of this, he alone is qualified to administer the oath against wifi (sorcery) and to implore the mercy of Odun toward those who have gone against his laws by fighting with arms.

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156 In his religious functions this usually weak and unobtrusive man acts with sovereign authority and assurance, and we have several times seen people tremble before him.

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[623] If someone has seriously transgressed the customary laws, or if he has stolen, committed adultery, given blows, poured forth serious insults or curses, the grand man inflicts on him punishment proportional to the gravity of the offense, such as making planks, /13/ a boat, pounding rice (if it is a woman). The product of the punishment is acquired by the grand man, as are the fines in money which he imposes in less serious cases.

643
685 For example in October, 1952, two adolescents of Bonville, Awétipay and Adyuka, were surprised while they were trying to break into an inhabited house; the grand man sentenced them forthwith to three days of forced labor, in the course of which he made them clean the approaches to the village and collect for his benefit wood for heating.

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462 He can also punish disobedient or disrespectful young men by making them do work reserved for women, such as weeding the approaches to the village and the removal of dog droppings.

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681 The grand man can confine a man to Boni villages by forbidding him to go beyond l'Enfant Perdu to the north and Kormotibo to the south; that is called sitafu sama (sitafu = captive). The man concerned, deprived of means of earning his living, thus becomes dependent on his family until he makes honorable amends.

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[621] Observation at Maripasoula, November 3, 1956. The wife of Balna, boatman of the border-fixing mission, gave birth at Pikin Tabiki, small farming village where she works with her mother and the latter's husband. Balna went to be present at the delivery.

It was very long and dramatic. According to Balna, an ggi sani had entered the child's body, making him stiff and impossible to extract. As a last resort they called a neighbor, T.... known for having a good gita. He called his gadu who revealed an efficacious remedy, since after the body of the sick woman was bathed with the prescribed leaves, the delivery ended successfully.

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[615] Since we were leaving on our trip, it remained to find someone to take his place in fulfilling one of the husband's duties: cutting the supply of wood for heating the water necessary for the hot douches /showers?/ the mother was going to be given several times a day for about three months. He made an agreement for that with Kwata, his mother-in-law's husband, to whom he will pay about 1,000 francs.

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[603] Presentation of the child. On the eighth day the maternal grandmother (or great-grandmother if she is still living) takes the child and gives it to another ancestress of the same lineage, stationed in front of the house. The latter presents it to the family. Then the head of the lineage, without taking the child, goes to the fraga tiki to make an offering of tafia, asking the ancestors to protect it.

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[782] For example, for the birth of A... (Lapé Tabiki village), son of O Yundu (L2, G60), it was Asakundu, grandmother of Yundu and great-grandmother of the child, who came to take him in the house and gave him over to her sister Térésia (L2, E57) to present him to the family (see genealogical table of the Lapé lineage, fraction 2).

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[613] Committing pikadu is one of the most serious offenses that a Refugee Black can commit; of course, as in the rest of the moral prescriptions, no abstract principle is called on: the elders teach the children from their earliest years: "If you commit pikadu, you will fall ill or die." The head of the lineage inflicts severe punishments on the guilty people to boot: for the man, to make a large number of planks with an adze; for the woman, to prepare and winnow as preparation for the next brako de several houques /cans/ of rice, a long and tedious job.

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[782] However, if in spite of insults and blows a man and woman of the same bet absolutely insist on marrying, people end up, for the sake of peace and quiet, by accepting the accomplished fact. They go to the fraga tiki to make an offering of tafia to the ancestors to ask them to forgive the offense committed. No reprobation extends to the children born of this union.

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[684] In the Awara Bakka lineage, which has practically rejected the law of exogamy, the principle of a sanction remains and there is a pretense of chasing the guilty ones across the village.

Not being able to use coercion and not having the right to expel a member of the lineage, captain and council can exert no material sanction.

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684 The same notion of pikadu is attached to unions between persons of the same patrilineage, although these patrilineages have no effective organization and exist only by the transmission of the fundamental interdiction, bwasi kina.

427 Before concluding an official or even clandestine union, the man and woman make sure that they do not have the same bwasi kina and in such a case give up their project; that, even if they are from different tribes, for example a Boni woman and a Saramaka.

/168 cont. /

764 co-wife, on the contrary, are completely veiled and show by their state of prostration the keenest sorrow. Each of them is assisted by a female relative who supports them when they have to move somewhere else, for they are supposed to be too over- come to move alone.

764 The interrogation as to the causes of death has already
787 taken place the day before, but Tafanié proclaims, in front of
761 me, the result of it to the latest arrivals: the deceased was struck down by a yorka which pursues the lineage with its kunu. She had already received several warnings in the form of illness; the yorka had demanded a payment which she and her near relatives had neglected to furnish. Impossible to learn anything further before being able to interrogate this yorka, whose habitual bearer has left for Saint-Laurent. It is necessary to wait for his return in order to mollify the yorka's anger.

764 About ten o'clock the members of the lanti kunu go to-
769 ward the fraga tiki of the Awara Bakka lo, in front of which they
778 all sit down on their stools. I notice that not a single man of
[613] the dead person's lineage appears in the front row. In it I recognize Popo (Lapé), Poopu (Dipélu II, Kormotibo), Tafanié (Papaïston). The one who is speaking is a foreigner passing through, a very aged and respected Djuka.

[782] The elders invoke Masa Gadu and the ancestors in general, asking them to protect them from adversity in the future; then the offering of water and tafia takes place (no cane juice). I notice that a little is poured on each of the secondary fraga tiki erected for the sake of each one of the ancestors who pursue another lineage with their kunu. That lasts about a quarter of an hour.

764 Next someone goes to ask the deceased to whom she
787 bequeaths the Papa gadu god which manifested itself in her;
776 for the gods are bequeathed like the rest of the inheritance,
428 even if those concerned are divinities which exercise the kunu
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/179 cont. /

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[613] After three months, an offering is made at the fraga tiki of the dead person's lineage, setting forth how much her spouse has respected her memory and asking permission to lighten the manifestations of his sorrow. The mourning is then lightened, but the man in mourning continues to wear a bandeau around his head or at the very least an old beret.

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[613] During the first months the man in mourning has no other responsibility than to hunt and fish at the order of the dead woman's lineage. He does his own cooking with the food given to him; he cuts a clearing for his mother-in-law or another woman of the deceased's relatives, who will farm it with him.
[431] Next, he receives the order to go and earn the money necessary for the sizable contribution he must bring to the festival of the lifting of mourning. During the entire duration of the mourning he must report on his work and moves.

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[606] When the end of mourning approaches, he must do a job for the benefit of his mother-in-law, generally redoing the roof of her house or building a boat for her.

[624] These arrangements do not involve any material sanction whatever. Like the rest of the social life of the Refugee Blacks, they rest entirely upon fear of a suprahuman sanction.

[589] After the lifting of mourning, the person in mourning may remarry without further delay.

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[439] State of widows and co-wives of a widower. The state of a woman in mourning is practically identical to that of a widower. She lives for the duration of mourning in her deceased husband's house under the surveillance of his near relatives on the maternal side. The dead man's lineage lends her all the objects she needs and furnishes the imported commodities (salt, kerosene, soap) that she uses. On the other hand, she may freely use the produce of the clearing that her husband had cut for her, since it is taken for granted that these products are the exclusive property of the wife.

/180 cont. /

765 An incident. In 1957, the Saramaka Gamba (75 years old),
613 Way's widower (Dip. I), caused a serious incident by refusing
689 several times the obedience he owed to the latter's lineage, on
the pretext that he was old and knew how to behave.

His son Maliki (born of a Saramaka woman), whom he was
raising, married to Way's daughter, had gone fishing above the
Litani. Upon his return, Kwau (80 years old), Way's elder
brother, reproached him for having left without authorization,
pointing out that his father, Gamba, being placed under his
authority by mourning, he was too, because of this fact. Gamba
[578] did not accept this reasoning and the two old men fought. This
[769] was a fine scandal. Kwau and the elders of Way's lineage came
[778] before the fraga tiki of L'Enfant Perdu village to lift his mourn-
[784] ing forthwith (which, let us recall, is the equivalent of cursing
him by delivering him over to the vengeance of the dead woman's
yorka).

Members of Way's family went to break up the shacks of
Gamba and his son, who lived hidden in the bush for some time.
[627] Then Gamba had the village heads intercede and obtained his
[769] pardon. The elders of Way's lineage went to the fraga tiki to
[778] utter the words putting things back in order.

765 Lifting of mourning. The festival of the lifting of mourning
- puu baaka - is celebrated 18 months to two years after the
burial. The delay may be a little longer, for most often the
village celebrates this festival for several of its dead at the
same time. It is a heavy burden, for festivals for lifting mourn-
ing attract many people and everyone present must find as
much as he wishes to eat and drink.

[621] This festival is celebrated in the framework of the village
and not in that of the lineage. It will be celebrated in the same
way for a Djuka who died in a Boni village, provided that he
lived there a sufficiently long time. In such a case the expenses

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824 A currently widespread idea about animism would lead one to think, for example, that before felling a tree a Refugee Black addresses words and offerings to it. That is entirely absent from his thought: either this tree is likely to serve as support for a god, in which case it can be touched only after complex rites having the aim of transferring the god elsewhere, or it is simply a tree, and one cuts it down without further ado.

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825 One very clear aspect of these conceptions is the dagu kunu, a curse resulting from the killing of a dog. Any animal may be killed with impunity but not a dog, because "a dog is almost a man."

[613] At the opposite extreme from the true kunu, a curse extending to a whole lineage, the dagu kunu applies only to the guilty person and draws only limited misfortunes upon him.

[772] No feeling whatever with respect to the dog enters into this conception, but only the idea that he is placed on a particular plane, near the plane of the human and his level of force.

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/194/

The Great Gods

The Boni recognize a supreme God, Nana (1), more

1. This term comes from the Agni.

commonly called Masa Gadu, and Kedi Amu, Kediampou in Kumentu language. He created the lower gods and all that lives on the earth.

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Here is how the old Boni men relate the myth of the creation of the world:

God created a brother and sister, Adam and Efa. They were twins. He put them in a place where they lived happily without working. But he forbade them to touch the fruit of the custard-apple tree.

776 /194 cont. /
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The great gods Gwangwéla and Gédéosu of the Djuka are not known to the Boni.

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Strictly speaking, no cult of Masa Gadu exists. No edifice is reserved for him, he has no priests, and no collective ceremonies are conducted on his behalf. He is nevertheless constantly present in the religious life of the Boni, associated with ancestor worship. Every ceremony of ancestor worship

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includes an invocation to Masa Gadu. From time to time, for specific motives such as the illness of a member of the lo, people go /195/ specially to the fraga tiki to invoke Masa Gadu.

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The oldest man of the lo officiates, while a younger one pours a little water and tafia at the foot of the fraga tiki; the elder addresses Masa Gadu in everyday language, in simple terms, in a familiar conversational tone, asking him for the cure of illnesses or the end of calamities. Those present, seated in a semicircle, punctuate the end of the speech with some rhythmical applause, uttering the ritual formula of thanks: "Gaŋ tŋgi tŋgi fi yu, Masa Gadu."

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Outside of these ceremonies which hardly go beyond the framework of the lineage, everyone may address Masa Gadu directly by praying aloud, if, for example, he finds himself alone in the bush and prey to an illness. One never addresses Masa Gadu other than for a specific material purpose. Inner prayer for the purpose of spiritual perfection does not exist to our knowledge among the Refugee Blacks.

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One applies directly to Masa Gadu when one believes oneself to be the victim of an iniquitous action (see curse). However, although the Refugee Blacks have a very lively sense of justice, they never call Masa Gadu to witness for the cruel and arbitrary vengeance (kunu) which the lower divinities are believed to exercise on them. It is taken for granted that all these divinities do conform to the role which Masa Gadu has assigned to them and that the suffering they inflict on men is indispensable to the proper working of the universe.

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/197 cont. /

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[643] The rites of the worship of Odun are known only by the
grand man and by an old man who replaces him when he travels.
[754] They are practiced only on the occasion of the collective oath
against wisi, renewed every two or three years, and when it is
[183] necessary to implore Odun's mercy toward an offender. The
officiant bathes the latter's body with a maceration of leaves
that he alone knows.

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[118] To question Odun and know whether he pardons, they
make use of a sacred object named afalaku, placed on a board
put on the heads of two men. The answers yes and no are
deduced by interpretation of the movements of the bearers,
as in the interrogation of the dead.

695 The oath before Odun is also practiced as a legal test,
permitting a man unjustly accused of theft or any misdeed
whatever to justify himself.

Thus, in November, 1959, B... of Asisi, accused by two
Djuka of being responsible for the burning of a large cabin
/carbet/ in which objects of value were stored, asked to justify
himself before Odun.

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591 Odun's laws, which have the effect of forbidding violence,
vengeance, and every form of oppression, give to the society
of the Refugee Blacks a unique atmosphere of dignity and
serenity which is not found to the same degree in animistic
African societies. Most African societies censure sorcery and
murder, but they accept vengeance and various forms of
oppression. It is probable that the men who, two or three
centuries ago, deep in the forests of Surinam, developed these
laws, were inspired more or less consciously by Christian
ideas; but they introduced them into an African system of
thought, associating them with the idea of material sanctions
in the present life, without which they would have been powerless.

776 /209 cont. /

[778] wata lugi, Indians of the water. In certain spots, people have
[782] known since the time of the ancestors that there resides such a
Bũnsuŋki, whose name they know; when they pass there, they
address a prayer to it while making a sacrifice of tafia.

776 (The Bũnsuŋki must not be confused with wata mama, the
171 mama-of-the-water of the Creoles, a dreaded divinity but one
which the Boni do not appear to worship. The wata mama lives
at the bottom of deep holes in river beds and never allows her
face to be seen; she sometimes abandons one of her long hairs
on the rocks and he who finds it becomes rich).

776 /210/ The Bũnsuŋki can enter, into human beings, exclusively,
787 it seems, into women. They give a different gita from those
[562] of the Kumẽnti. The possessed person dances at the edge of the
water, then swims and dives for a long time. They affirm that
[789] if its possession is sufficiently intense, the genie carries the
possessed woman along to the bottom of the water, where she
stays for a very long time without any harm! That is supposed
to have happened especially in Asisi village to a woman named
Dabisa.

Possession by the Bũnsuŋki is not frequent. In 1952 it
was known in Boni country in only three women.

[562] As for men, they may perceive these divinities in dreams
and receive benefits from them. For that they go to the place
[788] where it resides and bathe, uttering an invocation: "O god,
[782] watch over me, protect me, come to me at night when I sleep,
speak to me, act so that I may not be sick, so that I may get
rich." The following night, the divinity will come in a dream,
demand a sacrifice (beer in general), say that it /grants/
the prayer.

776 The Vɔɔdũ (1). These are gods much feared for their evil

1. This word is obviously
a deformation of the Dahomey
word vodũn.

787 /212 cont. /
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can read these messages; but we have not turned up any precise evidence on this subject (1).

1. These signs are very little systematized and have no relation whatever with the symbolic designs which figure in certain rituals of possession, especially in Dahomey and Haiti. It is permitted to see in them a simple likeness.

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The Papa gadu are chiefly consulted to ask them to reveal the cause of misfortunes that happen. One of them is not asked to cure an illness unless the interrogation reveals that it brought it on.

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The worship of the Papa gadu snake gods makes a strong impression on the West Indian Creoles who maintain regular relations with the Refugee Blacks. Most consider it as diabolical

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in nature and disapprove of it, but if the presence of an "adder" (anaconda snake) is noted in a neighboring creek, and if at the same time misfortunes occur, it happens that a Creole may go to ask the Refugee Blacks to practice rites to mollify the vengeance of the god. We have happened to catch sight

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of, hidden in a copse behind the habitation of a gold miner, a small altar decorated with blue and red pennants, the usual place of worship of the Papa gadu.

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Observation in Boniville, November, 1952.

[787]

An Asisi woman, Tini, comes to Boniville to consult her adoptive daughter Pamasa, about 35 years old, who is possessed by a Papa gadu named Adawa. Féni, 15 years old,

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Tini's son, has been sick for several days (fever, eruption all over the body). When someone comes to get us, the god has already entered into Pamasa, has sat down in a hut, and

/217 cont. /

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Most of the Boni are not concerned with their akka. The only ones who take heed of it are those who have reasons to believe it irritated. The worship rendered varies a good deal from one individual to another in the nature and frequency of the rites performed.

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For example, K..., of Papaiston village, prey to a persistent streak of bad luck, went to consult a Creole lukumā from Surinam, who revealed to him that it was the doing of unsatisfied desires of his akka. His akka wanted a black dog and a copper bracelet. He procured both for himself, and since, he says, he no longer has the same bad luck.

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B..., head of T... village, has in a corner of his hut a post crudely carved in the shape of a bust with a half calabash from which emerge stalks of sangaafu on its head. At the side is a small fraga tiki. He tells me that this is the god of the cult of his akka; these rites are strictly personal with him.

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[822]

Most of the akka esteem white beads and red cloth. If one sees a Boni wear a red cloak, one can be almost sure that it is by order of his akka.

[787]

If someone's mind wanders or he has bizarre dreams, he may see in this the feeling that his akka wishes to leave him and that he is in danger of its happening. He then goes to ask

[789]

an abiaman to make him an akka tetey: this is a ring of fibers worn on the big toe and which is supposed to prevent the akka from going away.

These rites vary a lot from one individual to the other, but they have a common principle. If someone begins to attend to his akka, he cannot abandon the worship during his lifetime, or else the akka will avenge itself.

Akka worship is strictly personal and is not bequeathed upon death.

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We have described the principal ceremonies of this worship in speaking of family life.

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One addresses only his near ancestors in maternal line, and one addresses them all collectively. Just as the custom of the Refugee Blacks rejects all that might individualize one line within a lineage, it rejects every individual bond between a given dead person and a given living person. Just as "uncles" exercise guardianship collectively over "nephews," the dead collectively protect the living. It would be a grave offense against the customary law of the Refugee Blacks to go individually to the fraga tiki to invoke the yorka of one or another of his relatives. We shall see further on that the only exception to this is for the ancestors who have made themselves conspicuous by exercising the kunu against another lineage.

[784]

Ancestor worship is organized within the lo, and its priest is the head of the lo, hedema or captain. Individualized fractions (bee) which may exist within the lo, like Papaiston 2, have no separate ancestor worship.

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The place of prayer is made up of a small square of ground about 1 meter x 1 meter, separated from village soil by pieces of boards; in the middle of this square is set a T-shaped post whose horizontal arm serves as support for a square of white cloth: this is the fraga tiki.

The cloth rots rapidly under the influence of bad weather, but it is not removed; a new one is attached over the old when it is too spoiled; likewise /220/ the post, which ends up by rotting, is not replaced as long as it does not fall to the ground. This behavior might be thought to be negligence, but it is nothing of the sort: for the Refugee Blacks, what has been offered to the ancestors is removed from the action of men; no one can touch it any more, even to repair it.

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769 Beside the principal fraga tiki one sometimes sees sticks
● 778 bearing fragments of white cloth; they have been planted in
honor of those ancestors who have demanded it.

769 The ceremonies at the fraga tiki have a very simple
778 character; prayers are said in the ordinary language and often
782 have the character of an intimate conversation. In the absence
of the head of the lineage, an old man pronounces them; while
he speaks, an assistant makes the offering of water and tafia.
Pouring water on the ground is a rite having as its purpose enter-
ing into contact with the ancestors: it is seen performed in
funeral ceremonies, before beginning the interrogation of the
yŕka. The tafia is an offering in the literal sense of the term;
at the time of the principal prayers being addressed to the an-
cestors, the offering of tafia is preceded by an offering of cane
[279] juice, kyēŕ wata. Cane juice was the beverage on feast days
in the times when the ancestors, at war with the Europeans,
were bereft of tafia.

The prayer formulas most commonly used ask the ancestors
to intercede with Masa gadu on behalf of their descendants:
"Ancestors, watch over us, protect us, pray to Masa gadu for
us so that...."

769 Possession by a yŕka. It is taken for granted that the yŕka of
787 an ancestor can enter into a member of his matrilineage and
613 reveal itself in the course of attacks of possession. This is a very
rare phenomenon. In 1958, in all the Boni country, only about
ten people were known who bore thus the yŕka of an ancestor.
These attacks come on spontaneously, no cult having their
provocation as its purpose. We were present in December, 1956
at one of these attacks in a young woman from Papaiston, Milli,
about 20 years old. Since the day before, the yŕka of an
ancestor of the lineage dead for two generations had manifested
itself in her intermittently; these attacks lasted several minutes;

/220 cont. /

769 her voice changed, imitating a man's; eyes staring, she ap-
778 peared to have no longer any consciousness of what was around
782 her. Then suddenly the attack would cease and she would busy
herself with her household occupations in the most natural
fashion. The yorka which was believed to become incarnate thus
in Mili's body spoke of very commonplace things, repeating
indefinitely sentences concerning minor happenings of the day,
or asking for a small offering of tafia on its behalf at the
fraga tiki. A psychiatrist would doubtless have thought of an
attack of mental dissociation.

(784) These yorka are not feared by their involuntary bearer,
since none can exercise a kunu against his own lineage; they
manifest themselves only exceptionally, sometimes indicating
remedies or warning of dangers. Thus it is that A... of the
Dipélu II lo, who has a Kumēnti besides, also has a yorka
which revealed itself in him without ever having been called
on. According to his comrades, this yorka sometimes steps
in with a cavernous voice, notably in September, 1952, during
a hunting expedition, where it shouted: "Let us not go that
way, we shall meet a jaguar." A... lost consciousness for
only a few seconds and had not been aware of anything.
/Figs. 26 and 27 appear here. / /221/

795 The nēmseki (1). Each Refugee Black has a nēmseki, that is
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1. This word seems to be a
deformation of English
"namesake" (homonym).

to say that certain elements of his personality are thought to
originate from the reincarnation of a certain ancestor. This is
a very obscure conception with the Boni, and without apparent
correlation with their notion of the akka and the yorka; they
never say: "I am the reincarnation of So-and-So," but simply:

/223 cont. /

784 begin his instruction in order to become a suitable bearer. (If
613 this procedure were not carried out, the god would not cease
428 its kunu at all, and the possibility of entering into contact with
it and appeasing it would be lost. Besides, sooner or later it
would come back into a member of the lineage.)

784 The kunu strikes without regard to kinship ties, even if
613 kinship between the bearer of the god and the supposed victim
[602] is very distant. Ex.: The Papa gadu of Donasi (Papaïston lo)
struck a young woman, Gou, with illness in January, 1957.

[782] Donasi and Gou are only relatives in the ninth degree. The
[361] members of the entire Papaïston lineage assembled to supplicate
the god: even people of Wétiti village in the lower Maroni
came.

775 The kunu exercised by the yorka of a dead person has a
784 special importance in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks, for it has
613 profound repercussions on the relations among the lineages.

[428] In principle, the yorka exercising a kunu has as bearer
a living member of its own lineage, who will bequeath it at his
death. But it is also possible that the yorka may take as bearer
a member of the lineage upon which it exercises the kunu.

[782] In both cases, the rite to appease the yorka is the same;
the yorka can be invoked effectively only by the members of its
own lineage, since one can pray (at least in principle) only to
one's own maternal ancestors.

When matrilineage A is struck by the kunu exercised by a
yorka of matrilineage B, its members thereupon go to consult
the elders of matrilineage A /sic/ and ask them to try to calm
the anger of their ancestor. The members of lineage A assemble
[769] around the fraga tiki of lineage B, in back of the elders of this
[778] lineage, in the presence of the bearer of the yorka, who calls
[787] on his gita, goes into trances and prophesying. The yorka
[782] usually asks for an offering of cane wine and tafia, which is
made at the foot of the /224/ fraga tiki by the elders of lineage
B (for the rite to be efficacious, the offering must have been
furnished by lineage A).

/224 cont. /

775 A yorka exercising a kunu may also demand that another
784 smaller fraga tiki be erected for it beside the principal fraga
769 tiki of its lo. In the villages of the Refugee Blacks one often
778 sees these little crosses provided with white veils like the main
613 fraga tiki, planted beside it a little obliquely.

775 The notion of the kunu exercised by a yorka explains the
784 rarity of murder among the Refugee Blacks. How would you
769 dare to kill someone when, as soon as it is freed from his body,
674 his yorka will have full latitude to make you sick, to make
tree branches fall across your path, to cause to suffer and to
kill all those dear to you? If someone is blinded by hate, it
is the idea of suicide which will dominate him. In October,
1952 we were able to observe this reaction in a man who had
just been subject to a deep humiliation: "I am going to kill
my body in order to go to kill that man and his whole family,"
he said to us, prey to a fit of rage; fortunately, when the fit
had passed, he came back to a more sound outlook on things.

775 It is to be noted that a yorka cannot exercise a kunu
784 against its own lineage. This notion explains why, in the times
613 when they exercised absolute authority, tribal chiefs had those
696 condemned to death executed by men of the same lineage.
[171] Apparently similar practices were the rule in olden days in
several African kingdoms, which allows one to think that notions
analogous to those of the kunu may be rather widespread there.

784 Situation of the various lineages with respect to the kunu. There
613 we touch on one of the most secret aspects of the social life of
the Refugee Blacks. Years of living among them are necessary
in order to obtain precise information on the nature and the
mode of action of the kunu acting on the various lineages.

784 Nearly all the entities which now exercise their kunu on the
613 Boni have been in their lineages since a very ancient period,
428 to the point where the name of their first bearer is forgotten.
They are transmitted inexorably from generation to generation.
In the course of the ages, the kunu have accumulated, and now
certain lineages are living with four, five, or even six kunu.

628 /226 cont. /
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The members of the Dipélu lineage did not believe a word of this affair, convinced that Kiboya, a proud and scheming woman, had pretended the gita to make herself interesting. Nevertheless, to bring back peace, they decided to go to Asisi and to ask pardon in front of the fraga tiki, pouring tafia, asking the ancestors not to take vengeance, the living being reconciled.

784 /227/ (Note that in this affair, the yorka manifests itself in a
614 member of the lineage on which it exercises the kunu.)
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784 Kunu of the Awara Bakka lineage. The Awara Bakka lineage
614 does not form a unit with respect to the kunu, and the situation
613 of its fractions is particularly interesting. This lineage includes:

--A principal fraction (Aw.B.1);

--A fraction whose kinship ties with the first are forgotten (Aw.B.2), whose position with respect to the kunu we have not been able to define.

--Finally, a group descended from Anèta, Djuka woman, wife of Pééyon † (Aw.B.1) settled in Asisi with her descendants in uterine line. We have called this group Aw.B.3. It has a separate kunu originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki where Anèta came from.

784 The Awara Bakka I, all living in Asisi village, had to
787 our knowledge three kunu in 1957:
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613 --One exercised by a Papa gadu god, borne up to 1957
428 by O Kuluba (Aw.B.1, D1). At her death in April, 1957, she bequeathed it, contrary to custom, to a person of another fraction, Summa (Aw.B.3). But the god did not ratify this legacy and, in January, 1958; it manifested itself in O Léna (Aw.B.1, F52), thus remaining in the same lineage;

/228 cont./

A kunu is exercised by a Dipélu yarka, borne in 1958 by a Loka woman. It is invoked before the fraga tiki of l'Enfant Perdu village (Dipélu I). Sometimes a broko de is celebrated for it in the same forms as the ceremony of the eighth day after death.

We have likewise not been able to collect complete information on the kunu of the Kotika lineage. This lineage, divided into three fractions, forms a unit with respect to the kunu.

A kunu is exercised by the yarka of a Surinam Creole assassinated in former times by a member of the lineage. Its bearer in 1958 was Todo (K1, E68), a man of the Kotika lo living in Boniville. In 1958 a young woman of the lineage, Awini (K1, E37), died suddenly; the yarka revealed that it had struck Awini because she had a liaison with Sintamann (K3, E145), thus committing pikadu. The idea of the collective responsibility of the lineage is so deeply accepted by the Boni that the near relatives of the dead woman did not reproach Sintamann at all.

/229/ A yarka of the Kotika lineage may exercise a kunu on the Djuka. This is the case of an affair going back to 1950; a young woman died some time after having a serious discussion with a Djuka woman who had hit her. Deaths among the Djuka these last years had been attributed to its vengeance.

It seems that there is no other kunu exercised by a Djuka upon a Boni lineage and vice versa. This is surprising, considering the fights which in former times set the two nations against each other.

The Djuka and Saramaka living isolated in the midst of the Boni know their kunu, which were revealed to them in childhood. In case of sickness, they employ divinatory procedures in order to know what kunu is concerned, then they make offerings. But in case of serious illness, they are forced to go back to the village of origin of their lineage.

754 /246 cont. /

755 The mal̄tif asked 2,000 francs from him as the price of
648 his consultation.

789 Curse. Someone who judges himself victim of evil-doing has at his disposal a supreme resource: /247/ cursing his adversary, that is, appealing directly to the supreme God, Masa Gadu, to ask him to punish his adversary. This is called seni gadu -- sending God -- against someone. To do that, while asking God to kill him or make him sick, one kneels and strikes the ground with both hands in the presence of the adversary or in front of his house. This act is regarded as totally different from wisi, for one is relying on the justice of God, who judges with equity and punishes only the guilty.

However that may be, cursing is for the Refugee Blacks a very serious act. It may happen that, feeling guilty, the source of the injustice asks pardon and promises to make amends for his misdeeds. The one who uttered the curse again implores Masa Gadu in order to take back the words he spoke: "He has given me satisfaction, do nothing against him." But oftener still it happens that a complicated affair is involved, that both parties concerned are persuaded of their legitimate ground and curse each other. The case must then be carried before the grand man and straightened out at once or misfortunes may pounce upon both lineages. The grand man judges without appeal and inflicts a punishment on the one who was wrong on the main issue of the debate. Then he obliges the adversaries to be reconciled before the fraga tiki, where the offering of tafia and water is made.

1828 } The effect of these conceptions is to render nearly im-
754 } possible hidden hatreds and rancors, which the Refugee Blacks
fear very much, for they are the source of wisi.

688 In general, the act of getting angry in public and serious-
689 ly insulting somebody is considered as an offense against moral and religious law, capable of attracting misfortunes; it is an

/250 cont./

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Next in the preoccupations of the Refugee Blacks come the obia called tapu, that is to say, protection. There exist numerous kinds adapted to the various dangers of a supernatural order (protection against other divinities, against the maleficent entities of the bush, against the wisimā).

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The Ampuku are generally asked for tapu against the wisimā. We saw a remarkable one in front of the house of F... (Dju). Its owner was not a little proud of it and he talked about it to us freely.

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The obia, placed at ground level in front of the door, was composed of a crude representation in clay of a head in which appeared two wide-open eyes: in front of it were planted in the ground three plant clusters including a planting of ground-nuts and one of maize; the whole was topped by a small basket containing an egg. It was necessary to water the obia with a certain infusion of leaves at regular intervals to restore its force.

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This obia insured infallible protection against wisimā; in fact, none of them would have been able to cross the threshold without stubbing his toe on the door frame in spite of all his precautions; F... stated that his obia constituted by this fact an effective means of detection of wisimā, for it was enough for him to invite suspects to enter his hut, to know what to think; the wisimā refused, for fear of thus being given away in the eyes of all; one could thus at least pin down suspicions.

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Other obia are called sama mofu tenty (obia against "people's mouths," that is, people's jealousy). They are nearly always seen on fine guns; they have a cord to hold them made of moriti palm fibers, to which two cowries are fastened.

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The obia intended to treat diseases generally have for support a calabash containing the infusion of leaves and a ball of pemba (kaolin). The person concerned sprinkles himself several times a day with this liquid.

/256 cont. /

845 When twins die young people almost always blame a
961 disagreement which has arisen in the lineage. The twins
578 did not want to live in a disunited family. The head of the
613 lineage then exhorts his people to be reconciled with one
another at any cost in order to avoid new misfortunes (1).

[753]

1. In general they have the idea
that disensions occurring in the
lineage have as a consequence
illnesses or misfortunes striking
the members of the lineage.

[182]

This notion plays a major role in
the social life of the Refugee
Blacks; after the kum, it is the
principle cement holding groups
together.

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One who harms a twin is sure to fall ill. Conversely,
it is assumed that the twin must not abuse his power, that he
must lead an upright life and avoid quarrels. He is nearer
to God than other men.

They assume for example that Efa, of Papalson village,
herself a twin and the mother of twins, has a very special
power. Nobody would risk harming her.

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In lineages having many twins there exists a place of
worship sacred to a vital principle called Twilfoge. The
nature of this principle is not clear. The Boni define it as
the soul of twins. Is it a matter of the first twins Adam and
Eve? Or of a collective worship offered up to all deceased
twins?

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This worship is celebrated each time there is occasion to protect newborn babies. They are washed with a certain decoction of leaves.

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Every four or five years on the average a big dance takes place, then the father and mother of twins and the twins themselves are washed in order to maintain their powers and keep them in good health.

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If these dances are not held, dead twins will show their anger by making living twins and parents of twins sick.

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Lineages that do not have twins do not practice these rites. If twins are born to them, they will apply at the place of worship of another lineage.

Papalison and Lapé have this cult particularly highly developed.

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Tyoe pikin. It is assumed that a woman may be made pregnant by a river god, either a Papa gadu snake god or by the Wata lagi, which look like Indians. Children thus conceived are called tyoe pikin.

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A... of Papalison, had cut a clearing opposite a remarkable white rock called Weti st3, where she used to moor her boat. She had not had any children for several years and she became pregnant. When her daughter was born a possessed person revealed that she was born of a Papa gadu snake god which lived there: since then her parents /relatives/ go regularly to this rock to make offerings.

About 1910 Alama (Kormotibo) had followed her husband to a shipyard on the lower river; one day while walking in the forest she met an Indian having the appearance of a Galibi Indian, who was carrying a newborn baby. She stopped and admired the baby. The Indian said to her: "Do you wish to raise him?" She acquiesced. He said: "We shall see each other again"; then he went away so quickly that she had the impression that he had disappeared on the spot.

/258 cont./

776 One of the best known of these gods is that of the Maruini.
823 It is assumed to control all the tributaries of the Maruini as far
778 as their sources. Its place of worship is a thicket situated
782 downstream from the dangerous Kubi Sula Falls, at the mouth
[539] of the river. Before starting to go upriver in August, 1956,
the crews of our three boats, in an atmosphere of great
meditation, lined up behind the eldest of them, who made
the offering of water and tafia, uttering these words: "God
who commands this river, watch over us, keep us from being
sick, let no accident happen to us; if there is on this river
an interdiction which we do not know (2) and which, through

2. It is obvious here that
this is a case of de facto
worship of a divinity about
which nothing is known.

ignorance, we do not observe, pardon us. Bring us back to
our villages safe and sound." The boatmen came one after
the other to make the offering of tafia. The scene lasted more
than a quarter of an hour. This ceremony was not without
nobility, engendering belief in that sincere fervor of animists
so often mentioned in the /259/ ethnographic literature.

771 But our return at the end of our work trip took place in a
completely different atmosphere, showing the strictly practical
and utilitarian side of the religion of the Refugee Blacks.
Once past the Kubi Sula, the three boss boatmen could not
persuade any of their men, who were in the act of eating
their meal, to accompany them as far as the place of worship
to thank the god. Some told us straight out that they were
scoffing at this god from now on, having no intention of
[782] coming back on the Maruini. As for the boss boatmen them-
selves, they measured stingily the quantity of tafia offered

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532 Cult of Mama gɔɔ. Mama gɔɔ, mother of the earth, is represented by a crude statue of white clay provided with enormous breasts, symbol of fecundity, which can be seen in a little hut situated on the open place of Boniville village. Each year, when the time for cutting the clearings approaches, the grand man, surrounded by many other people, prays to the god to grant fertility to the plantings. If rain does not fall, an offering of water and tafia is made and the statue is sprinkled.

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The Boni do not appear to associate the idea of women's fecundity with that of the fertility of the soil, and we have not heard anyone say that the grand man prays on this subject.

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Neither do they appear to have a very clear idea about the relationships of this worship with that of the gɔɔ gadu, local gods of the soil.

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Every three years a great possession dance takes place in Boniville on January 1. /260/ in which the Papa gadu gods dance in front of the sanctuary of Mama gɔɔ. We have not been able to obtain specific information on the meaning of this rite.

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[784] Cult of the gɔɔ gadu. It is assumed that every portion of land is under the sway of a local god, gɔɔ gadu. Its power is limited only by the fertility of the soil, and he who neglects its worship cannot be attacked in his person or in his goods, but only punished by a poor harvest.

What is the nature of these gods, what is their place in the cosmogony? These are questions which not one of our informants had ever asked himself. In their minds, gɔɔ gadu has a de facto existence, and is rendered de facto worship. This worship consists essentially of:

[782]

--Offerings made at the moment of planting;

[527]

--The observance of a local day of rest, kina de, corresponding to the god's day of rest.

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In order to observe these rites suitably, it is important then to know in which god's domain are situated the lands one is cultivating. On the banks of the great river, the division of the lands among the gods of the soil has been well known since the time of the ancestors. By summarizing the kina de of the farming habitations, one realizes that the domain of each god is extensive; it occupies several kilometers along the banks. It is often thought (but not everywhere) that the two banks are controlled by different gods. For example:

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Downstream from Boniville, right bank: Wednesday;

Toward Kormotibo, right bank: Thursday;

Toward the mouth of the Inini, both banks: Wednesday;

Toward Simayé Falls, both banks: Saturday.

On those days one may do nothing related to agriculture, and in particular one may not dig in the earth nor plant.

If absolutely necessary one may go to pull up tubercules.

What one must avoid above all is handling tools which make noise and could disturb the god, except in the immediate vicinity of the water which is not under its control. However, one may shoot off a gun.

This kina de is observed more strictly than Friday, the general kina de in Boni country, which appears to be related to the cult of Mama gɔɔ. On those days people mend boats and especially go hunting and fishing.

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Offerings are made in a purely individual and local fashion; in each farming habitation is seen at the approaches to the wharf a worship place formed by a simple meat-drying rack decorated with pennants of several colors, on which the offerings are exposed; even if this habitation combines people of diverse kin groups, there is only one place of worship.

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778 People who have no farming habitation and who farm on the outskirts of /Fig. 29 appears here/ /261/ residence villages get together in groups of three or four to establish a worship place in a copse, preserved from the forest adjoining their clearings.

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782 Cane juice, syrup, rice pounded fine but not cooked are offered.

They make this offering at the time of the plantings, saying, "Gadu, please come and eat a little, watch over us, thank you very much."

The Boni who observe the rites most faithfully renew this offering each month at the new moon.

If someone has two clearings in two different sectors, he performs the rites twice, each gab gadu being entirely independent of the others.

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171 On this subject one notices that the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks are much more systematized than those of the Creole populations of African origin in the West Indies. They do not think each field has an individual soul; neither do they apparently believe in the possibility of capturing the soul of the field in order to make the neighbor's field sterile out of revenge. These beliefs, which play such a large role in the popular magic of the West Indies, seem to be without exact counterpart in the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks.

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[776] Interdictions and various rites. Cutting a clearing involves great dangers: it is necessary to avoid injuring the maleficent divinities of the bush, which have as supports well-defined plants and animals, by brutal destruction of these supports, and their wreaking inexorable revenge -- the kunu -- on the lineage of the unintentional sacrilege. It is therefore necessary to seek out these plants and animals and to carry out for each the rites recommended by the ancestors' experience without forgetting a single one. No Refugee Black would dream of

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241 neglecting these rites. Their rigorous observance has the effect of preventing farming from becoming for them a commercial activity and of keeping a religious and family feeling in it.

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[776] -- The kikiti (silk-cotton tree) is a much feared tree, for according to the elders each one of them shelters 12 categories of divinities, especially a Papa gadu and an Ampuku. So it is absolutely impossible to cut it. One must even be very careful not to injure its roots which spread far. The site of every one felled is preserved. Likewise people watch carefully so as not to injure the roots of the big silk-cotton trees often found in the villages.

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361 Still, the fact that their site was chosen for setting up a village shows that people believe they can make an alliance with the divinities which reside in a silk-cotton tree and draw their protection upon themselves.

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[776] -- The katu tree (Bombax Surinamensis), tree of very large size, living in symbiosis with a parasitic liana which appears to enclose it in a gigantic net, also shelters maleficent divinities (Ampuku, Papa gadu, Bumba gadu). One may cut it down after performing rites whose purpose is to transfer these divinities into another tree.

First, one must have procured from a man who possesses this remedy a pot of abia containing an infusion of leaves in the middle of which is a bracelet of fibers. /262/ It costs two liters of tafia, four liters of beverage (beer for example), one large piece of cloth, and one machete.

Having arrived at the foot of the tree, one bathes his body and machete with this infusion; one puts the fiber bracelet on one's arm. One also bathes several small sticks provided with squares of white cloth (for the Papa gadu), dark blue and red (for the Ampuku), and a pinot palm (pina t3ago) leaf.

822 One plants the sticks at the foot of the tree, one strikes the trunk with the palm leaf while invoking the divinities of

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the tree: "Kia sani di de na a udu ya, da mu kumato, beka
mi ɔ faa ɛɣ. Kam na a pina tɔgo: All things (suprahuman
entities) who are in this tree, leave it, for I am going to throw
it to the ground; come into this palm leaf." One takes away
the palm leaf and the little flags far from there into the in-
terior of the lands, to a spot where nobody is likely to come
to fell trees, and one arranges them beside some big tree.
The divinities will come and settle there. Nevertheless, it is
still necessary to wait almost a month to cut the katu tree,
probably to leave the maleficent influences time to dissipate.

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The Boni are so afraid of this tree that many of them,
deeming these precautions insufficient, give up the idea of
cutting it down and go to establish their clearings elsewhere.
The Creole gold miners of the Haut Maroni, who call it
cottonwood, also attribute a maleficent influence to it and
some of them do not cut it.

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The Refugee Blacks fear also, but to a lesser degree,
what they call kɔtkɔti, that is, the small trees of any species
which, instead of having grown straight, have two angles
in their trunk like a Z. This is a very rare anomaly. In such
a shrub is hidden a maleficent entity, taku sani, capable, if
a man cut the trunk unintentionally, to take revenge on him
by paralyzing a limb or even the whole body in a bent position.
In order to see whether or not the entity is present in the shrub,
there exists, according to the Boni, a very simple means:
one gently brings the finger near the bent part. If he feels
his finger held there to the point where he has trouble draw-
ing it back, the genie is present! The power of autosuggestion
characteristic of the Refugee Blacks shows itself clearly here.

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Rites exist for rendering the kɔtkɔti harmless, for cutting
them with impunity, and even for using them in magic
preparations, but we do not know the details. Kɔtkɔti are
among the objects usually found in the chapels (ɔbia ɔsu) of
Kumɛnti; we have even happened to see one used to fasten a

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door; it was a particularly feared kIndu that no thief would have dared to remove.

825 -- The KIntamasu are the divinities, especially maleficent
778 and hostile to men, who live in the termitaries (these are
776 termites proper, who make their nest in the earth, and not wood lice, much more common). There is one to each termitary.

(787) After a meticulous examination of the soil of the clearing, one marks all the termitaries /263/ and sprinkles each of them with a preparation containing leaves, pink clay kukusa, and manioc juice. One adjures the genie to go away, no matter where.

(787) It happens that in spite of all the precautions taken a termitary is forgotten. Then, several days later, one will have the consternation of seeing the KIntamasu reveal itself in someone of the lineage; it announces that it is going to exercise its kunu (curse). It is temporarily appeased by offerings of tafia, various drinks, red cloth.

776 The KIntamasu call themselves the Akolo. Through
198 the mouth of their bearers they speak a language nobody under-
787 stands. However, when they wish to be understood by those present they speak Kumari.

755 Observation in Bonville, January, 1957:
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A...., boatman of the border-fixing mission, asks for three days off. His wife, Masauman, has been ill for several days; divination (in this particular case the gita of a female relative in his lineage) showed that it was the doing of a KIntamasu injured in the burning of the clearing which he himself, A...., cut for his wife in October. The KIntamasu has not yet manifested itself directly, but a kunu threatens; to appease it he must put in action the remedy known only to M...., an old man of Asisi. He will go to the spot, following